



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 58.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S MYSTERIOUS TRAIL

OR
TRACKING A HIDDEN FOE



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

SUDDENLY OUT OF THE GRAVE CAME A FLASH AND A SHARP REPORT FROM BUFFALO BILL'S REVOLVER. TWICE AGAIN IT FLASHED, AND TWO MORE REDSKINS WENT DOWN.



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BUFFALO BILL'S MYSTERIOUS TRAIL;

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

BUFFALO BILL'S MISSION.

"Hold! I have that man's pardon!"

The words rung like bugle-notes from the lips of a man who had dashed suddenly upon the scene of a military execution, his horse covered with foam, panting like a hound, and with flanks torn by the cruel spurs.

The execution squad stood with their guns at an aim, and the fatal order to fire was about to issue from the mouth of the officer in command, when there came the thrilling words:

"I have that man's pardon!"

But an instant too late the utterance, for several nervous fingers along the line touched the triggers, and, with the report of the guns, the doomed man fell in his tracks.

A cry of horror arose from a hundred throats and a scene of excitement that placed at defiance stern discipline was about to follow, when the same trumpet voice was heard:

"Attention all! the Sioux, a thousand strong, are in yonder timber, preparing to charge upon you!"

Hardly had the warning been given when a roar of rifles was heard, bullets pattered like rain upon the field, and yells that were fearful to hear filled the air.

Loud orders were given by the commanding officer for the soldiers to form in a solid body, and the retreat was begun across the prairie to the fort an eighth of a mile distant.

Then out from the timber rode hundreds of wild horsemen, redskins in all their hideous war paint, and, with war cries and thundering hoofs, the Sioux came riding down upon the soldier band.

"Halt! Right about! Ready, aim, fire!" came the command of the officer to his soldiers, and a hundred guns flashed in the gathering twilight, and many a mustang and his red rider went down before the leaden hail.

But the sweeping mass came on, and it seemed as though the battalion of gallant soldiers must be ridden down, when red sheets of flame shot forth from the walls

of the fort; and the deep roar of the cannon made the earth tremble.

The cheers of the soldiers on the prairie, mingling with the bursting shells, the rattle of small-arms, thundering of hoofs and wild cries of the savages, made up a scene that was appalling in the increasing gloom of nightfall.

But the fire of the artillery from the fort, sending shells into the midst of the redskin horsemen, spread terror into their ranks, and they turned and fled to the timber for shelter, though, with Indian pluck, dragging their dead and wounded with them.

Loud rang the cheers from the battalion on the prairie and they were answered by the soldiers in the fort, who still sent shells flying into the timber.

"Captain Vaughan, I thank you for your prompt act in our great peril, for, but for your heavy guns, they would have swept over us," said the officer commanding the force now marching into the fort, and addressing a young and handsome man, who came forward to greet them.

"It was not my thought, colonel, for I meant to ride out to your aid, but the orders of that dashing fellow, whose horse fell dead as he reached the fort," answered Captain Grayson Vaughan.

"Ha! the same man that rode up with the order to spare Sergeant Dudley Drew."

"Yes, and he then dashed on toward the fort, ordering as he rode, in a voice that would have run along a brigade front:

"Turn your heavy guns on yonder timber!"

"Open with your artillery! The Sioux will sweep over them!"

"I saw that he was right, sprung to the nearest guns with what men I could call to my aid, and we did just what that brave fellow knew we would."

"He spurred away, after saying that he had Drew's pardon, and——"

"Then Sergeant Drew was not executed, sir?"

"Yes, for several shots were fired, just as the man rode up, and he fell.

"Then we had to look to our safety and he was left upon the field; but here comes the courier now, and I will speak to him."

The colonel who commanded the fort, and Captain Grayson Vaughan now walked toward the one who had brought the pardon at the fatal movement of the order for the execution, as he advanced to meet them.

"What a splendid specimen of manhood!" whispered the captain.

"Handsome as a picture," replied Colonel Yulee.

Halting, the person referred to gave a military salute, and said:

"I have dispatches for you, sir, if you are Colonel Yulee."

"I was sorry I did not arrive a moment sooner, sir, but my horse did his best and fell dead as I reached the fort."

The words were spoken in a quick manner, but with perfect respect.

"You did your best, sir, I am sure, and permit me to say that but for your coming as you did we would have been ridden down and massacred in that wild charge.

"Your name, please?"

"My name is William Cody, Colonel Yulee, and I am a government scout and guide."

"What! are you the famous Buffalo Bill, the best Indian fighter, scout and guide on the plains?"

"Yes, sir, I am Buffalo Bill," was the modest reply.

"I am glad to meet you, indeed, Cody. Permit me to introduce you to Captain Vaughan, who so promptly obeyed your orders to use his guns."

"Pardon me, Captain Vaughan, for my abrupt orders, sir, but I knew that artillery would check the redskins, and that is why I rode on to the fort as I did."

"You need not ask my pardon, Mr. Cody, for God knows there would be wailing in this fort to-night but for you."

"Indeed there would be, Cody, and it shall be reported so in my return dispatches to the general.

"But come to my quarters, for you are my guest while here."

"Thank you, sir; but do you think I was too late to save poor Sergeant Drew?"

"Alas, yes; for he fell under the fire of some of the men who did not recover arms at your words."

"I hope he was not killed, sir; and, with your permission, I will go out and see."

"What! you do not mean you will go out on the prairie now, when it is doubtless filled with redskins around the fort?"

"Yes, sir; but I will not be gone long."

"Cody, take my advice and do not do so foolhardy an act," urged the colonel.

"Yes; it would be madness," Captain Vaughan added.

"I will risk it, sir; for somehow I do not believe Sergeant Drew was killed."

After making his full report to Colonel Yulee, Buffalo Bill saluted and walked rapidly toward the gate leading from the fort.

A moment after, he had passed the sentinel and disappeared in the gloom out upon the prairie.

CHAPTER II.

FOR LIFE OR DEATH.

General Custer sat in his quarters reading his dispatches.

It was night, and a force of cavalry had just arrived in the barracks, bringing dispatches from frontier posts further west, and also the news that the Sioux were on the warpath.

As he sat in his cozy quarters, reading over the various documents lying before him, his firm face darkened, and, springing to his feet, he said, aloud:

"This must not be; no, it must not be, for there is some wrong here."

He read over one of the papers again, and then called to an orderly, who at once presented himself at the door with a salute.

"Orderly, ask Buffalo Bill, my chief of scouts, to come here."

The orderly disappeared, and soon the noted borderman, whose name is known the world over, and who was then winning his name, presented himself before General Custer.

"Sit down, Bill, and I want to ask you what you think of sending a man to Colonel Yulee on a most important mission?"

"The colonel is at Fort Advance, is he not, sir?"

"Yes."

"The Sioux are thick between here and there, sir."

"I know that well, and my reports to-night show that matters are in a very precarious position on the far border, though, of course, there is no fear for Fort Advance, as Yulee has a company of artillery, a hundred cavalry and twice as many infantry, and five thousand Sioux could not capture him; but it is on another question I wish one of your best men to go."

"It seems a question, general, of certain death; but I will go and ask for a volunteer."

"Do so, Cody, and let me know at once."

The scout left the general's quarters, and the latter got up and paced the floor in a thoughtful mood.

"No, no, some man must go, for he shall not die," he thundered several times.

Soon the scout returned, and General Custer said, eagerly:

"What luck?"

"Not a man will volunteer, sir, for they feel it is certain death."

"Of course, I cannot order a man on a forlorn hope, Cody; but let me tell you how important it is to have one go."

"A man in Yulee's command, a sergeant at headquarters, has been tried by court-martial and sentenced to death. His offense was in shooting his superior officer, a lieutenant, wounding him severely and yet not fatally. He made no defense, said in his behalf that he had but done his duty, and regretted that he had not killed Lieutenant Hobart Otey, which was the name of the officer.

The latter is an appointed officer in the service, not being a West Point graduate, and little is known of his antecedents. Why Sergeant Dudley Drew shot him he would not say, any more than that it was a quarrel between them, and there were no witnesses.

"Now, Sergeant Drew I know well, and he once saved my life; in fact, saved a party of seven of us from massacre. He was a scout then, attached to some outpost, and we were out hunting, little dreaming we were being surrounded by Indians the while. He saw them, as he was bearing dispatches, knew our danger, dashed through the Indian line and warned us, leading us to a place of safety, an old cabin, where he left us while he again broke through the redskin's ranks, and, riding to the outpost, brought us aid, and just in the nick of time. He soon after joined the army as a private, and his daring advanced him to a sergeantcy. He is a gentleman, belonging to a refined family, and possessing means, and some strange freak or misfortune has made him join the army as a private soldier.

"Colonel Yulee says in his dispatches that the man is most popular with all, and that he thinks Lieutenant Otey has insulted him in some way, and that is why he recommends him to mercy, and if I will pardon him, as I have the power to do under late orders, he will break him of his rank and let him be otherwise punished.

"Now, I wish to save this man, and these dispatches having been delayed, through making a circuit on account of Indians, he has hardly twenty-four hours to live, for he is sentenced to be shot to-morrow at sunset, on the parade-ground near the fort."

"General, I will carry that pardon, sir, and any dispatches that you have to send. At least I will try," and the scout smiled.

"Cody, you are a brave, splendid fellow, but I cannot risk it with you."

"Still, sir, I have sounded my men and not one will go, and you know they are not men to back down where they can see one chance to get through."

"No, but do you see a chance, Bill?"

"Well, sir, I have gotten through so often where I could see no chance to do so, that I may find, when I get started, that there is one in this case."

"It is a ride of just one hundred and fifty miles."

"Yes, sir; but I will take my two best horses, one to follow, and thus relieve them as I can, and I guess I can make it."

"It will be a tremendous ride, not counting the danger."

"I will try it, sir."

"When will you be ready to start?"

"Within half an hour, sir."

And within that time Buffalo Bill rode away from the general's quarters, mounted upon a superb horse, and

with a second animal, equally as good, following like a dog behind him.

"God bless you, Bill!" cried the general, as the daring scout rode away, and after him rang cheers from half a thousand throats, for all knew that he was going to face appalling odds, and bound on a mission to save a human life, risking his own in the effort to do so.

When Buffalo Bill left the encampment of General Custer, and rode forth in the darkness, no one more than he knew the desperate dangers that would beset his path.

A child of the border, for from early boyhood he had been a dweller upon the plains, he knew the Indian cunning as few other men did, and when the Sioux were on the warpath against the further outposts and settlements, he was aware that it meant a cruel struggle for mastery ere the redskins could be put down.

Aware of the positions of the different outposts and forts, and where the settlements were, he could judge just what the course of the Indians would be.

Their hiding-places he knew, and their intentions he could readily guess at.

To reach Fort Advance he had to pass through the midst of their roving hostile bands, and with no succor from a paleface near.

Fort Advance was the strongest of the line of forts, and no fear was to be felt for its garrison, as it was provisioned at all times to guard against a siege.

With no hope perhaps of taking the fort, the redskins would surround it, to prevent reinforcements from being sent from there to aid smaller outposts and settlements.

Thus would Fort Advance be completely surrounded, and with a line of redskins to break through, it would be a death gantlet he would have to run to reach the place.

The fort was situated upon a hill, heavily timbered, and it had stockade walls and strong breastworks.

A swift-flowing stream wound around the base of the hill, so that the splendid water supply could not be cut off, a bend in the creek being included in the fortified line.

There were good cabins for the soldiers, excellent quarters for the officers, ample stable-room and plenty of timber.

The parade ground was on the prairie, at the base of the slope, and hardly an eighth of a mile distant.

Nearly a mile across the prairie was a ridge, heavily timbered, but all around the fort was under the sweep of the battery of six guns, twelve and six pounders, lately sent there, and the existence of which the Indians had not found out.

Knowing the country as he did, Buffalo Bill chose the shortest way, and pressed on at a pace which he meant his horses should keep up as long as it was possible for them to do so.

After two hours' steady travel, the scout halted for a rest.

He did not spare himself, so unsaddled his horses, gave both a good rubbing down and rest of fifteen minutes, when he resumed his lonely way.

So it went on through the night, until by morning many miles had been cast behind, and the scout, feeling that he could do so, as he had a good survey of the country about him, halted for breakfast and rest.

The horses were his first care, and these were watered, rubbed down well and staked out.

Then a fire was built and the humble breakfast cooked and eaten.

This delayed Buffalo Bill an hour, and the man as well as the horses felt refreshed.

At the same steady gait he pressed on, changing from one horse to another every hour, the short stop to do so seeming to give the animals a breathing spell.

Toward noon the scout felt that his horses were beginning to weaken under the terrible strain, and he anxiously calculated the distance yet to go and the hours to get there by sunset.

Suddenly the scout rode over a rise in the prairie and beheld a horseman not two hundred yards away.

It was a white man, and he caught sight of Buffalo Bill almost at the same instant that he was discovered.

The scout rode on, but brought his rifle around for use, for he thought that he recognized the man.

The stranger also prepared to greet friend or foe and then halted for the other to come up, for his direction was such that he was crossing the trail of Buffalo Bill.

"Ho, Buffalo Bill, is it war or friendship?" cried out the man as Cody drew near, and both were ready to draw.

"It is not war, Max Melmer, unless you wish it; but it is certainly not friendship," was the cool reply of the scout, as he advanced toward the man.

"Well, call it peace, for I want no trouble with you, Bill."

"I'm afraid, Max Melmer, if you go on as you are doing, some day it will come to war to the death between us."

"Well, you'll find me ready; but I choose my way and you take yours."

The man was tall, of muscular build, and was dressed in Indian costume, from headdress to moccasins.

He wore a belt in which were three revolvers and a knife, carried a repeating rifle across his Mexican saddle, and a lariat hung over the horn.

A bow and arrows also were part of his equipment, while in one hand he held a long lance, such as are carried by the Comanche Indians.

His beard and hair were worn very long, and his face

would have made a good artist's model for Mephisto, so full of deviltry and cunning was it.

He had been a scout for the army, had married the pretty daughter of a Sioux chief, and had then turned renegade against the whites, leading the redskins against his own race.

A reward was offered for his head, and Buffalo Bill had long wished to capture him, but for some reasons of his own he preferred peace just then.

"Are you leading a scouting party, Bill, and how far back are they?" asked the renegade.

And there was a shadow of anxiety in his tone.

"No, I am carrying dispatches to Fort Advance. Do you ride that way, for I would not mind company?"

"Yes, I'm going that way; but your dispatches must be urgent, for I see you bring two horses and have ridden them hard."

"Yes, my dispatches are important, Melmer, for it is known that you are on the warpath with your red devils."

"That is a mistake."

"You are certainly not here alone?"

"No; I have a hunting party of braves with me, and got separated from them in chasing buffalo."

"Have you been chasing buffalo, Max?"

"Yes."

"Not on that horse, for he is as fresh as a prairie flower."

"He don't show work," was the evasive reply.

"He is a splendid animal."

"He is, indeed, for there is not one on the plains that can run longer and faster," the renegade declared, proudly.

"Where are you to join your hunting party?"

"Up toward Fort Advance."

"Then we go some distance together."

"Yes; and I am glad of it, Bill, for I have never wanted to be foes with you."

"You should never have turned renegade, then."

The man laughed and replied:

"Every one to his taste, for I like the wild life I lead."

"Is that one of your braves yonder?"

Buffalo Bill pointed over the prairie to the right as they rode along, and the renegade turned his head to look; but he quickly found that he had made a mistake, for a revolver was thrust against his temple and Buffalo Bill said:

"You are my game, Renegade Melmer!"

The quiet smile on the face of Buffalo Bill was in strange contrast to the look of horror upon that of the renegade.

The latter was too thorough a borderman not to know that the scout meant just what he said.

He was aware that a movement of his hand would

cause that firm finger to draw on the trigger and a bullet would go crashing through his brain.

So he hissed:

"You are treacherous, Buffalo Bill."

"Oh, no, for I said there was no friendship, and I intend there shall be peace by nipping your claws," and as he spoke he took from the prisoner his rifle, belt of arms, arrows and lance.

Then he felt about his body for any concealed weapon, still holding his revolver at a level, and finding none, took the lariat and quickly bound the renegade's hands.

"Now, Max, we will change horses."

"Are you going to steal my horse?"

"No; I'm going to let you ride one of mine. It will be safer for me should we meet that hunting party of braves, you know."

"Oh! but I will get even with you some day, Buffalo Bill."

"You are in no position to threaten, Max Melmer, so do not do so."

The scout then made his prisoner mount his horse as soon as he had changed the saddles and bridles, and the splendid animal of the renegade seemed to prefer the change to the lighter one.

"Now, Max Melmer, we will ride on at a brisk canter, and if we meet your red hunters, you'll prove a pretty good hostage, so that I can go through in safety."

"They are not on the warpath, I told you, only a hunting party, so they will not harm you."

"I won't trust them any more than I will their pale-face chief."

"No, you shall take me through their lines in safety, or I will kill you and risk it alone."

"If I pass you through the redskins will you let me go free?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I want you."

"What for?"

"As a present to Colonel Yulee, who commands Fort Advance."

"He will hang me."

"It is just what you deserve."

"I'm rich, Buffalo Bill, and I'll pay you your price if you will let me go."

"Your money was made by murder, horse stealing and pillaging the settlers, and I would not touch it."

"I will give you full right to go over the plains, unmolested by any redskins."

"I do not ask your protection."

"Do not take me to the fort."

"I will if I can get you there."

"You will never do that."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I have fifteen hundred mounted warriors between here and Fort Advance."

"I am glad to know your force."

"Oh, I don't mind telling you, for I know you will never get through."

"And you have fifteen hundred warriors on the war-path?"

"I have."

"You expect to capture Fort Advance?"

"Yes, easily."

"I doubt it."

"I have five hundred braves along the line of settlements and outposts, and a thousand now waiting for me to lead them on Fort Advance."

"A large hunting party, surely; but it seems you are after human game?"

"I am, and you will be my first victim."

"How so?"

"You will soon be my prisoner."

"No, I may be taken by the Sioux, I admit, but you'll not be at the scalp-dance held in honor of my scalplock."

"Why so?"

"I shall kill you, Renegade Melmer, the moment your braves fire on me."

"Do you intend to attempt to break through the line?"

"I do."

"You are a fool."

"Thank you."

"Do you know a piece of timber this side of Fort Advance?"

"I think I do."

"Well, I have a thousand horses there, and all around the fort, by to-night, I will have a line of warriors, though they will not be seen, of course."

"What will the scouts in the fort be doing not to know you are near?"

"We will only move near by dark, and then charge the fort."

"A nice little scheme; but you tell your plans beforehand."

"I talk to you as to a dead man, for you will not be alive at sunset."

"I see," and the scout smiled.

"You sneer at the idea?"

"I never sneer at death, Renegade Melmer, for it is too sudden to fool with; but I have hopes of eating supper in the fort."

"Your horses won't hold out to get there."

"Yours will," was the laconic response.

They had been riding on at a brisk canter while talking, the scout's horses tired, and with drooping heads, but

the splendid roan of the renegade fresh and anxious to go.

It was very evident to the scout that the renegade had just ridden out of some camp near, when he met him, and that he had made a lucky escape, for certainly the redskins had not seen him.

The scout could see by the expression upon the face of Max Melmer, that he felt no anxiety as to the result, and this convinced him that the renegade had told him the truth regarding the Indians between them and Fort Advance.

Crossing the level stretch of prairie, they advanced toward some scattering timber land, which was broken and rolling.

"Your braves are in yonder timber," said the scout.

"How do you know?"

"Because beyond the half mile of timber cover the prairie is open all around the fort excepting the ridge you speak of, and it can be approached by horsemen without being seen by the sentinels."

"The leading bodies of my braves are already at the ridge, but you will have several hundred to break through before you get out of yonder timber," was the renegade's reply, and he smiled with perfect confidence.

"You are right, for we are already seen, as I notice mounted warriors in the timber land."

"Yes, they see us, so you had better accept my offer."

"I make no terms with you, Max Melmer; but I warn you that I will kill you if you give any alarm or sign," was the stern response.

Then he added: "Come!"

He had the three horses now abreast, and the one ridden by the renegade next to him.

The third animal carried no load, but was fastened by his stake-rope to the horse ridden by the renegade.

The scout had fastened the lance of Max Melmer in such a position that it would look as though he was carrying it, and thus they rode on.

Nearer and nearer they approached the timber, and the Sioux warriors saw them coming, but beholding their chief, had no idea that he was a prisoner.

"Not a word or a sign, sir!"

"If they speak to you, order them to await your return," hissed Buffalo Bill through his set teeth.

The renegade was now very pale, for he saw the scout's bold game, and knew, if he could not advise his braves of his danger, that he would be carried through the lines, and Buffalo Bill would take him to the fort.

But the two horses of the scout were failing fast, as the three dashed at a swinging gallop into the timber, and the one ridden by Buffalo Bill was now feeling the rapid run.

Fully a hundred Indians were in view, some mounted,

others on foot near their ponies, but all watching their chief and the famous scout, whom they now recognized as the enemy of their race.

A few more rods and the line would be passed and then the scout would have nothing between him and the fort excepting the warriors on the ridge awaiting night-fall to attack, and he could not be seen by these until too late to cut him off.

The renegade was now livid, for he saw that the scout held his hands behind him, as though to appear that he was the captive.

Death by hanging would be his fate there, and he would risk the bullet of the scout, for he knew the noble nature of Buffalo Bill, and could not believe he would shoot him, bound as he was and unable to protect himself.

So raising his deep voice he shouted in the Sioux tongue, which the scout understood well:

"Warriors, your white chief is the prisoner of Buffalo Bill; so fire on him if you kill me!"

A yell broke from half a hundred braves who heard the words, and rifles cracked and arrows flew.

Down went the horse ridden by the renegade, and the horse hitched to him, tired and tottering, was dragged to the earth with him.

But the roan bounded on under the spurs of Buffalo Bill, and escaping the hot fire, he rode through the timber like a deer.

Then a dash across a plain at terrific speed, up a rise, and the fort came in view.

Nearer and nearer, urged by the cruel spurs, the roan drew to the fort, while the eyes of Buffalo Bill were now fixed upon the solemn scene of execution.

He knew what it meant, and he knew too that the soldiers were ignorant of the savage horsemen in hiding and soon to dash out upon them.

Nearer and nearer, the sound of hoof-falls unheard on the soft prairie grass, until he was near enough to hear the fatal order of the officer:

"Ready! aim——"

Then came in thunder tones:

"Hold! I have that man's pardon!"

CHAPTER III.

THE NIGHT SEARCH.

The sudden appearance, wholly unexpected, of a thousand redskins in the vicinity of the fort, had at once put all the garrison on the alert, and preparations were made for a siege or a fight.

The artillery gave great confidence to all, for it was well known in what fear the redskins stood of the "horse guns," as they called the cannon.

Still, nothing was neglected, and the soldiers were all at their posts.

The going out of the daring scout was seen by many, and the whisper ran the rounds of the works that Buffalo Bill was the bold courier who had brought the pardon of Sergeant Drew, and that he had gone out to bring in the soldier, whom he did not believe had been killed by the straggling fire of the execution squad.

A hush fell upon the garrison at the news, and all waited in breathless suspense for his coming back.

Leaving the fort, the scout made his way in a crouching attitude toward the parade ground, the scene of the execution.

He knew that several soldiers had fallen, who had not been brought off the field, and he did not think that the redskins would do aught more until they recovered from their shock, or the arrival of their white chief, whom the scout knew had not been shot, having fallen with his horse, as he went down, being bound to the saddle.

The renegade might be hurt, but he did not think he was dead, and he knew the Indians would not make any important move until he gave them orders.

In their retreat, under the fire of the heavy guns, which they had not expected to find at the fort, the redskins had carried off their killed and wounded, but the scout was aware that under the cover of darkness they would come upon the field to get the trappings from their dead ponies, while some would venture to the parade ground to scalp the slain or wounded soldiers.

If they got there before he did, it would be no-use to look for Sergeant Drew, for, dead or alive, he would be scalped along with other unfortunates who might have fallen with him.

That he was taking desperate chances he was well aware; but his eyesight was better than that of any Indian he had ever met, he was a dead shot, powerful as a giant and knew not what fear was.

As he neared the parade ground he got down upon his knees, pressed his ear upon the prairie and thus listened for some time.

Then he crept on gradually, nearer and nearer to the scene of the execution.

The night was very dark, for clouds obscured the stars, and it was not possible to see an object at sixty paces distant.

Nearer and nearer crept the scout, until the absence of grass beneath him told him that he was upon the well-beaten-down parade and drill ground.

Presently his eyes fell upon a dark object ahead.

Halting and gazing at it, he knew that it was a human form; but dead or alive he did not know.

"Two soldiers fell who were not brought off, they told

me, so, with Sergeant Drew, there will be three," he muttered to himself.

Creeping nearer he saw another form, a short distance to the right, and still further on he beheld the third.

To this one he made his way first, for just here should lie the sergeant, whether dead or alive.

He reached the form, bent over it, placed his hand upon the heart and said:

"He is dead."

Then his eyes fell upon another dark object, and creeping to it, he saw that it was the coffin of the condemned man, and in it lay a rope to lower it into the grave dug near by.

He was about to return to the body when his eyes saw a shadowy form coming toward him.

Instantly Buffalo Bill dropped down behind the coffin, into the grave, while he muttered grimly:

"Let that redskin come on, for I've got a coffin here ready for him, and a grave, too!"

The Indian, as the scout now saw it was, came on slowly and with noiseless tread.

He was evidently the advance scout for others, coming for the scalps of the fallen soldiers.

An Indian who was cautiously approaching the open grave, in which crouched Buffalo Bill, and by the side of which was the coffin intended for Sergeant Drew, came on with the air of one who seemed to have more fear of the living than the dead.

The Sioux had seen that several soldiers had fallen under their fire; but so demoralized had they been by the fire of the artillery from the fort that they had not rallied very quickly, and it had been dark some time before it entered the heads of some of the bolder ones to go after the scalps as a slight return for what they had lost.

So a chief went ahead, wishing to add greater glory to his name, and ordered his braves to follow at quite a distance behind.

It was this chief, thirsting for redskin glory, who was making his way toward the scout.

He saw the open grave, the coffin and the body near, as he stood contemplating the scene.

He did not, however, see the inhabitant of that open grave.

Having taken in the situation, he approached the coffin first.

It was not the Indian way to box up the dead, and this instance of civilization on the part of the palefaces seemed to interest him, for he sat down upon the coffin, as though he wished to contemplate, as a cat would a mouse, the body lying near, ere he scientifically deprived the head of its scalplock, according to the custom of his fathers.

He had hardly taken his seat, when up rose the scout;

his hands closed about the neck of the redskin with vise-like grip, and he was dragged backward into the pit.

That there was a desperate struggle going on in that sepulcher was evident from the hard breathing and dull blows that came from there.

Then all was still, and a form peered above the grave. It was Buffalo Bill.

He glanced out quickly and eagerly across the prairie, and down he went out of sight.

The cause of this was in seeing a dozen forms coming across the prairie and not fifty feet away.

They looked as shadowy as spectres, and were as silent; but they were Indians, and most dangerous customers.

"They've got me in a hole," thought Buffalo Bill, making this grim joke of his perilous situation.

Silently they came on, and in a few seconds halted, for their eyes had fallen upon the various dark objects before them.

They recognized the dead bodies, and having seen the arrangements for the execution from their hiding-place, could guess what was the meaning of the coffin and the grave.

Coming cautiously forward once more they halted within ten feet of the grave.

Then they looked about them, in search for their chief.

As he had given no warning of danger, they did not suspect anything wrong; but it was their nature to be cautious.

If they found the heads of the soldiers scalped, then their chief had reaped his red reward; but if they found that the scalps still remained, then it would be their pleasure to take them.

In low voices they held a short discussion, but the scout could only catch the drift of their words, so low they spoke, and that was their speculation regarding which way their chief had gone.

Having decided to again advance they did so, glanced at the pile of earth thrown from the grave, turned the coffin over, and then one of them stepped quickly to the side of the dead soldier and bent over him.

An ejaculation of delight told the scout that he had discovered the scalp had not been taken, and that it would be his pleasure to remove the gory trophy.

But, suddenly, out of the grave came a flash and sharp report from Buffalo Bill's revolver, and a shriek was followed by startled yells and the bounding away of the spectral forms.

But the revolver of the scout flashed twice more, and two more redskins went down.

To say that those braves were scared would be to speak mildly, for they were absolutely terrified, and went springing into the air and from one side to the other, in

the peculiar redskin way, as though they were dodging bullets.

They had run fifty feet from the grave before the few who had revolvers or rifles thought of firing them, and they did this at random.

In spite of his danger, Buffalo Bill laughed, and he kept his revolvers rattling to hasten the flight of the paint-bedaubed warriors.

The moment they were out of sight the scout sprung from the grave, and quickly running to each fallen warrior he stooped over them and in an instant their scalps hung at his belt, for well he knew that a redskin is never dead until he is scalped.

The yells of the frightened Indians had been heard and echoed afar off by hundreds of demoniacal howls from their comrades, and the scout realized that he was in fearful peril.

But suddenly a bright flame shot forth from the fort, and a shrieking shell came flying high in air over the parade ground, bursting far beyond.

"Bravo for the thoughtful man that fired that gun, for it will save me," said the brave scout to himself.

Then he leaned over the open grave and said something in the Sioux tongue. A moment after a form arose and the scout dragged it out.

It was the captured chief, and his hands were bound behind his back, his feet hobbled and a rope gag was in his mouth.

Unfastening the feet of his captive, Buffalo Bill led him quickly to the side of the soldier's body, and stooping, placed the limp form upon the back of the chief.

The redskin demurred, and seemed about to resist, gagged and bound as he was; but Buffalo Bill pointed to the open grave and spoke a few stern words in the Sioux tongue.

Whatever it was, it caused resistance to cease, and the body was quickly strapped upon the back of the humbled chief, who was then forced to move forward to the next fallen soldier.

This one the scout raised in his strong arms and carried to the side of his fallen comrade.

Grasping the second one about the body, he motioned for the chief to precede him, and with his double load began his retreat, and as he staggered along Buffalo Bill muttered:

"No redskin's scalping-knife shall desecrate your heads, my gallant fellows."

At every ten paces the scout would halt, rest an instant and glance behind him, for he knew not what instant a pack of savages would be upon his heels.

Then he would resume his load of dead humanity and struggle on as before.

CHAPTER IV.

WATCHING AND WAITING.

There was no more popular man in the army than was Colonel Royal Yulee. He was a thorough soldier, a perfect disciplinarian, yet withal a kind commander and a genial gentleman.

He had won fame, and while bordering on half a century of years was yet full of life and dash. A man of wealth, and therefore one who could take his ease, did he so desire, he yet preferred the life of a soldier, the hardships of camp life, and always was anxious to remain in active duty upon the border.

Thus had he won the name of an Indian fighter to be relied upon, and had been given the most important command on the far frontier.

Captain Grayson Vaughan was his favorite officer, and his adjutant.

Young, handsome, an heir to a fortune, Captain Vaughan also preferred life on the plains to the humdrum existence of a city, and he had the name of being one of the most daring officers in Fort Advance, and that was saying a great deal, for among the cavalry, artillery and infantry companies that comprised the garrison there were gallant, dashing soldiers to be numbered by the score.

Going to his quarters, accompanied by Captain Grayson, Colonel Yulee had read over his dispatches, brought by Buffalo Bill, and the letter of General Custer saying why he pardoned Sergeant Dudley Drew.

"Vaughan, somehow I think General Custer knows more about Drew than he has written, and I regret exceedingly that he was shot, for I liked the man immensely."

"And so did I, colonel; but then he may have been only wounded, as Cody suggested, and come round all right, if he can bring him in."

"I hope so, but I fear to the contrary."

"And the men who fired, sir, without the order?"

"I can do nothing with them, for to tell you the truth, the little bunch of scrub-oaks hid Cody until he was right upon us almost, and Talbot had given the words, 'Ready, aim,' when the scout's voice shouted 'Hold!'"

"Half the men of the platoon thought it was Talbot's voice, and involuntarily some of them touched the trigger, and one or more bullets struck Drew, who fell in his tracks."

"The words of Cody, the excitement of his coming, the charge of the Indians a moment after prevented any one seeing whether Drew was killed or not, and, in fact, the two men who were killed under the fire of the Indians had to be also left upon the field, though we did bring off our wounded."

"I cannot see, sir, that any censure can fall upon any

one in the matter, for Cody, as he says, broke down two of his own horses in coming here, and the animal he took from that renegade dropped dead from the strain as he reached the fort."

"Yes, he made a marvelous ride, and had a wonderful escape. He is a man of astonishing nerve and endurance, Vaughan."

"He is indeed, Colonel Yulee; but I wished to ask you, sir, about poor Drew. I suppose he died with the same courage he has shown throughout his trial?"

"He did, indeed, and asked that his arms should not be pinioned. He saluted me before Talbot gave his orders, smiled at the platoon that was to kill him, and said in a voice without a quiver:

"I am ready."

"He was a strange man, and I am sure had a history of interest."

"I am half-way inclined to believe that there is more back of his shooting Lieutenant Otey than appeared at the trial; but he would not say what, and Otey held his peace."

"So I believe, colonel; but I am anxious about that brave scout, so, shall we go out to the parapet and see if aught has been heard of him?"

"Yes, for I wish to make the rounds and see that all are at their posts, though, of course, Major Brown has neglected nothing; still, with fifteen hundred Indians around us, it is important not to be caught napping, and Cody gave that as the number, you remember."

The colonel and his adjutant now left their quarters and walked toward the outer line of defense of the fort.

They joined the officer at the heavy stockade gate, and found there the men standing ready at the gun which Captain Vaughan had used on the Indians so promptly at the command of Buffalo Bill.

Captain Talbot, the officer who had commanded the execution, stood there, conversing with the lieutenant, who had charge of the gun, and they, with the soldiers near, were gazing out into the gloom on the prairie, apparently watching and waiting.

"Is there a line of scouts out now, Captain Talbot?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir; I ordered them to take their stand at the sentry posts one hundred yards off, and to fire if they discovered any movement of the Indians."

"That was right; but I suppose you sent the scouts out, and not the soldiers?"

"Yes, sir, and all of them, so that they form a line around the fort."

"Then we cannot be surprised, though the Indians could not get over the works if they got to them, before we could beat them back, and ten to one could not take

it; but have you heard nothing of that daring fellow, Cody?"

"No, sir; but I sent his saddle and bridle up to your quarters, and it is a perfect arsenal, for he had a rifle and a belt of arms tied to it, not to speak of a bow and arrows and lariat," and Captain Talbot laughed.

"Those are the arms of that infamous renegade, Max Mehner, the white chief of the Sioux, whom he captured and would have gotten to the fort with him, had not the redskins shot the horse which the scamp was riding—ha! what is that?"

All eyes now turned out upon the prairie, where three quick flashes were seen, followed by a wild shriek of agony, and cries of mingled terror and fury.

A moment after, other flashes were seen, and these appeared to come from running men, going from the fort.

The flashes, quick as they were, had been vivid enough to show several forms upon the prairie, and Captain Vaughan called out:

"It is that brave Buffalo Bill, and he is on the parade ground surrounded by Indians."

"Quick! throw a shell over them, Duval!" the colonel ordered, and the gun belched forth its flame and iron, and the shell burst beyond where the flashes had been seen.

Then all was silence once more, after the wild whoops of the redskins in the timber, who knew that misfortune had befallen some of their comrades; but if they had anticipated charging to the rescue, that firing of the bursting shell checked their ardor in a wonderful degree.

As all remained silent out upon the prairie after the gun had been fired, Colonel Yulee ordered a second shell to be sent over toward where the redskins were lurking, and this brought forth renewed yells of fury, and the flash revealed horsemen retreating out of range.

"I fear the scout has been sacrificed to his daring," the colonel sadly remarked.

"Permit me to take a squad of men and go as far as the parade ground, sir?" pleaded Grayson Vaughan.

"No, Vaughan, you can see nothing in the darkness, and we cannot afford any more sacrifices to-night."

"Perhaps, Colonel Yulee, if I advanced with a cavalry company we could discover just what has taken place on the parade ground," urged the young adjutant.

"No, Vaughan, I will not let you and the brave fellows become targets in this darkness for lurking Indians."

Seeing that the colonel was determined, Captain Vaughan gave up the idea and stood watching with the others.

Suddenly the sentinel not far distant called out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

All was at once the deepest attention.

"Friend!" came the response in a clear voice.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!" returned the sentinel.

"I'll advance, sentinel, but I cannot give you the countersign, as I do not know it."

"The scout's voice!" cried the colonel, and then he called out:

"Ho, Cody! is that you?"

"Yes, Colonel Yulee, and I have company."

"All right! Come along! Sentinel, let him pass!"

The colonel, Grayson Vaughan and several other officers now hurried down to the gate, and they were greatly amazed to see Buffalo Bill and his captive chief stagger in under the loads they carried.

The large lamp swinging over the arched entrance of the gate revealed the Indian chief, his hands tied, and upon his back, strapped firmly to him, the body of a dead soldier.

Just behind the chief came Buffalo Bill, with one dead soldier thrown over his right shoulder, the other grasped under his left arm.

It was a strange, a striking picture, and the appearance of the scout as he gladly laid down his heavy load revealed the fact that he had been rolling in the dirt.

At his belt hung three scalplocks, and his costume was considerably disarranged.

The chief looked as though he had been caught in a street sweeper, for his face was bleeding, his fine feathers were limp and broken, his war paint had lost its brilliancy and he was dirt color from head to feet.

His black eyes glared savagely upon the officers in front of him, but he was silent, except for his hard-drawn breath.

"Buffalo Bill, I am happy indeed to see you back; but what in Heaven's name does all this mean?" cried Colonel Yulee.

"Let me unload my pack horse, colonel, and I will tell you, for this dead sergeant is no light load for the chief," answered Buffalo Bill.

And he began to untie the lariat that held the body to the Indian's back.

"Ha! have you Sergeant Drew there, and is he dead?"

"Yes, colonel, he is dead."

"But it is not Sergeant Drew."

"Not the sergeant, sir?"

"No; it is a private in I Company of Infantry."

"I found him near the coffin, sir, and by the grave."

"It is not Sergeant Drew, nor are either of these two poor fellows; but I thought we left but two men dead on the field."

"I found these three, sir, as you see, and this one I took to be the sergeant, as he lay nearest the grave."

"It is not he, Cody."

"I saw no other there, sir."

"Then the Indians had carried him off."

"No, sir; this red gentleman is the first of the Indians who put in an appearance, and I saw him coming."

"I think he is a chief of considerable importance."

And turning to the Indian he said in the Sioux tongue:

"You are the great chief, Fighting Fox?"

The chief seemed pleased to be recognized, and said in response:

"Yes; me Fighting Fox; big chief."

"I thought so," remarked the scout.

"How did you catch him, Cody?" asked Colonel Yulee.

"I saw him coming, and so I dropped into the grave. He felt his importance, so made his warriors stay behind until he had had a little fun all to himself. He spied the coffin and seemed to think it an easy-chair, so sat down upon it and I reached up and pulled him backward into the grave."

The officers laughed heartily at this, and Buffalo Bill continued:

"He is a large Indian, as you see, colonel, but he was so terribly surprised and frightened that I mastered him very quickly, after a little choking, and then I tied and gagged him, for I expected his friends along very soon."

"And they came, from those three fresh scalps you wear?"

"Colonel, a white man should not take scalps, I suppose; but then the Indians glory over a dead brave, as you know, who is not scalped, and I wished that chief to feel that his warriors were thoroughly dead."

"But how did you kill them?"

"They came along after their chief."

"The three of them?"

"With about nine more, and as one of them jumped for the body of the man I took for Sergeant Drew I fired, and then let two others have it. You should have seen them as those shots came up from that grave! They just started on the back trail at a mile a minute scoot, and I never saw Indians so scared. Why, they never fired until they got a good start and then shot up in the air, I think, for I heard no bullets fly near me."

"As soon as I had started them on their race I concluded I wanted to stay no longer, and, not wishing to have the soldiers scalped, my friend Fighting Fox helped me fetch 'em in."

"I like to have got a shot from your line of scouts, only the man I was lucky enough to come upon was a

cool-headed fellow, and he neither lost his nerve or his head at sight of us."

"Well, Cody, you have done what no other man I ever met could do; but I am sorry about Drew. He is surely dead and scalped."

"Undoubtedly."

"Captain Talbot, please have the poor fellows removed and prepared for burial, and the prisoner taken to the guard house," ordered Colonel Yulee, and then he led the scout away with him to his quarters, Captain Vaughan accompanying them, more and more interested in the daring man who bore the appellation of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER V.

THE SERGEANT AT HOME.

Seated in a small log cabin within the fort a month before the execution of Sergeant Drew was a man of striking appearance, one who looked more fitting to wear epaulets upon his shoulders than the stripes of an ordnance sergeant upon his arm.

All of six feet, with broad shoulders, an athletic, graceful form, small feet and hands, and a face that was intensely expressive, handsome and intelligent, a manner calm, yet commanding, he was one to attract observation in any assemblage.

His uniform was neat and fitted him well, and he was cleaning a revolver with the air of one who understood the need of having a weapon in perfect condition.

His surroundings were peculiar and attractive, for his cabin was without doubt meant for but one occupant.

It stood by itself, some fifty paces from the row of cabins, the quarters of his soldier comrades.

It was built of logs, yet it was a perfect picture of a handsome mansion within.

Within it was but a single room, with a broad fireplace, over which was an exquisitely-carved mantle of cedar.

A rustic bedstead, with carved posts, a table-desk skillfully made of different woods, several unique easy-chairs, an easel upon which stood a painting just completed, the portrait of a beautiful maiden, with great, large, sad, beautiful eyes and a face of exquisite loveliness, made up the furniture of the room, except some sketches and colorings on the wall, a pair of rapiers over the mantel, a pair of dueling pistols beneath them, a guitar suspended by a ribbon, some books and a few minor articles.

The person in this little solitary cabin was Sergeant Dudley Drew, a man who had enlisted in the army some time before, and whose daring had rapidly raised him to

the position of ordnance sergeant at Fort Advance, and who, in the absence of a commissioned officer to fill the position, was acting as such.

A man of refinement and education, Colonel Yulee had readily granted him permission to build a little cabin for himself and live apart, while his doing so had angered his comrades, although he had told them he wished only to live alone to keep up his study of art.

A few days before, an officer had come to the fort who had been placed in charge of the ordnance department, not from any neglect or incapacity of the sergeant, but simply because he had been assigned to that duty.

As the sergeant sat there in his little cabin cleaning his revolver, a sad expression rested upon his fine face.

It disappeared, however, as he heard a step approaching, and his expression was that of perfect serenity.

"Ah, sergeant, I find you at work, as I supposed I would, and I dropped in to have a little chat with you," said the visitor, a man wearing the rank of a quartermaster sergeant, and whose face was by no means an attractive one.

"Sit down, Sergeant Sayles, though I am afraid you will not find me a very entertaining host, as you know I have just returned from a scouting expedition of two weeks and am very tired."

"Yes; I knew that you had gone off with Captain Talbot, and he says you are as good a scout as the best of them."

"He flatters me."

"No; the men say the same."

"Well, I have passed considerable time upon the border, and should be pretty well up in prairie craft."

"But I forgot to ask you how you like your new commander?"

"To whom do you refer?"

"Lieutenant Hobart Otey, the new ordnance officer."

"How do you like him?"

"I have been off on a scout, as you know, so have not seen him since his arrival."

"Well, the colonel gave you such a splendid record the lieutenant is anxious to see you, and I heard him say half an hour ago, as you had returned, he would walk over to see you."

"Indeed, he is very kind; but you must excuse me now, Sergeant Sayles, as I have to go out on business," and so saying Dudley Drew arose and his visitor departed also.

Sergeant Drew put on his hat and walked out, leaving the door of his cabin ajar.

Hardly had he disappeared among the cabins, when an officer, wearing a lieutenant's insignia on his fatigue uniform, came toward the little house. He rapped at the door, and getting no reply shoved it open and entered.

He was a man of thirty, with a dark face, sinister in expression it might be, and yet a face full of fascination.

It was the countenance of a man to admire, but not to trust. His form was elegant, his air that of a soldier dandy; but yet there seemed a reserve force about him that might prove very strong if put to the test.

"Well, my sergeant is a tony fellow and no mistake. Books, yes, and of a classic character; a guitar, rapiers, a superb pair of dueling-pistols, carved furniture, some models in clay, and really very pretty colorings in the way of pictures.

An exclamation of surprise broke from the lips of the lieutenant, who was standing gazing upon the pictures when the sergeant entered.

He turned quickly.

The face of the sub-officer was pale, but calm, the lips hard set, and the eyes blazing.

"Who are you?" he gasped, rather than asked, while his face whitened as he caught sight of the burning eyes of the sergeant.

"I am Dudley Drew, ordnance-sergeant at the fort, and your under officer," was the reply.

"You are impertinent, sir, in your words and manner."

"Do you think so?"

"I do, and shall report you to Colonel Yulee," and Lieutenant Hobart Otey made a movement as though to leave the cabin.

"Hold on, Lieutenant Otey."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I stand between you and liberty."

"Do you dare to bar my way?"

"I do."

"Man, are you mad?"

"It is a wonder that I am not."

Lieutenant Otey pushed forward and at last, losing his temper, struck the sergeant a blow in the face.

Dudley grew white with rage, as he drew a revolver and pointed it with a deadly aim at the bullying lieutenant.

"I am a gentleman," he grated, "although only a sergeant. I will take a blow from no one. You must fight a duel with me."

The lieutenant, although pale to the lips, tried to pass it off with a sneer.

"What do your strange words mean?"

"They mean that I hold you in my power, Hobart Otey. They mean that you have bitterly wronged me and all that I love.

"Call for aid, and I tell my story."

"Fight a duel with you?"

"Just that."

"This is preposterous."

"Either fight me with swords, pistols or rifles, man to man, alone, without witnesses, on to-morrow afternoon, or I will kill you now."

"Ha! you make this threat?"

"I do, and I will keep it."

The lieutenant gazed into the face of the man before him, and seemed to read there determination to carry out his purpose.

So he said:

"What! do you threaten to kill me?"

"If I can, when we face each other in a duel."

"There must be no witnesses?"

"Not a soul."

"You will swear to this?"

"I will, for I want no witnesses."

"How can a meeting be arranged?"

"Easily enough. I often get permission to go for a hunt on the prairie, and I will await you two hours before sunset at the spring on the ridge south of the fort.

"You can ride out alone and easily find it, and I will be there."

"If I kill you, as I certainly shall?"

"You can let it be supposed that Indians did it; scalp me if you wish, to carry out the cheat still better."

"And if I should fall?"

"Then I will be avenged."

"But what will you do?"

"That will be of no interest to you then," was the laconic response.

"Come, my man, let us drop this matter and be friends."

"No, meet me as I demand, or take the consequences."

Lieutenant Otey was silent a moment, and then he said firmly:

"So be it; I will meet you."

"Upon your honor as a soldier?"

"Yes."

The sergeant instantly stepped aside and allowed the officer to pass out of the cabin.

When Lieutenant Hobart Otey left the cabin of the sergeant Colonel Yulee had said to him.

"Well, Otey, how do you like Sergeant Drew?"

"He seems to be a man of great refinement and education, sir."

"He is, and I wonder that he is content to remain in the army in a low rank."

"Do you know aught about him, sir?"

"Nothing, I may say."

"Is he an American, Colonel Yulee?"

"I think that is evident."

"He appears to be quite an artist."

"He is, indeed, far above the average amateur."

"Do you think, sir, Dudley Drew is his right name?"

"That I cannot tell you; but he enlisted under that name, and I have no reason to doubt its being *bona fide*."

"I went once to his cabin and we had a talk together, sir; but I fear that there is some mystery regarding the man."

"So do I; but I have no right to look into his antecedents, so long as he does his duty well, and certainly he is as good a soldier as I ever saw."

Lieutenant Otey left the colonel's quarters disappointed, for he was in hopes of finding out something about the mysterious sergeant.

The latter had obtained permission to go for a hunt on the prairies.

So he started out on foot, throwing his rifle across his shoulder.

He went in a different direction from the ridge, and, reaching the bank of the creek, stopped, drew off his heavy boots, and replaced them with moccasins. Then he made a circuit of several miles, so as not to be seen from the fort, and reached the ridge.

There was a fine spring there, well known to the Indians, and where wild animals were wont to come to quench their thirst, for the water was icy cold and clear as crystal.

A short tour of the ridge timber showed that there was no one in its shelter, and then the sergeant threw himself down to rest, for he had an hour or more before the time for Lieutenant Otey to arrive.

At last he arose, and saw a horseman approaching across the prairie.

"He is coming, for he does not come directly from the fort. He expects to kill me, and then carry out my suggestion, take my scalp and ride in haste back to the fort to report that he found me dead. We shall see."

The lieutenant rode up very cautiously, and seemed to fear an attack from the sergeant.

But the latter called out:

"There is no danger, sir, for I am not an assassin. I have brought my rapiers, as you are noted for the use of them, I believe."

"I will fight you with them," eagerly said the officer, for he seemed to feel with a sword he had no equal.

The lieutenant dismounted, hitched his horse, and the sergeant handed him the two weapons to select from.

"They are both alike?"

"As you see, Lieutenant Otey."

"Then either will do," and he took the one he held in his hand.

"If these fail us, sir, we will use my dueling pistols, for you also have the name of being a good shot."

"The swords will not fail, sir," was the significant response of the officer.

"If they do, we can stand twenty paces apart, walk five paces to where our weapons lay, loaded, pick them up and fire."

"The blades will not fail, sir," again said the lieutenant, with a peculiar look.

"Let us take our places, sir, and see."

They took their positions and crossed blades.

Then sharply came the words:

"Defend yourself!"

Instantly the combat was begun, and with all his skill the officer was driven back step by step from the first.

He knew at once that he had met his master, and he fought only on the defensive.

This seemed to unnerve him, for he was by no means as cool as his adversary, who smiled as he fought, until suddenly tiring of the work, he struck the sword of the officer from his hand and thrust the point of his blade against his breast.

Hobart Otey seemed to feel that his life must end, for he turned livid, started back, and his hand dropped upon his hip; but the sergeant lowered his weapon quickly, and said:

"I cannot kill a man, sir, who holds no weapon in his hand. We will try the pistols, and you may prove yourself a better shot than you are a swordsman."

"Let us stop this farce, for you have given me my life."

"Yes, because you are disarmed; but I came here to kill you."

"And you demand another meeting?"

"I do."

"I will not grant it."

"You will, or take the consequences."

An impatient oath burst from the white lips of the officer, and he said:

"Come, get your pistols, and I will load mine."

"They are both loaded, sir, and you will take your choice, for one has a bullet, the other is blank."

The lieutenant selected one of the pistols, placed it, as did the sergeant his, upon spots ten paces apart, and then the two stepped off five paces, wheeled and faced each other.

"Forward, march!"

The command of the sergeant rang out, and both stepped briskly forward.

At the fifth step the sergeant cried:

"Fire!"

The weapons flashed together, and the sergeant stood erect, while Lieutenant Otey fell his length upon the ground.

"I knew it was fated for me to have the loaded weapon, and it has brought me my revenge—no, he is not dead!"

He sprang to the side of the wounded man, who faintly said:

"Water."

The sergeant brought it from the spring.

Then he examined his wound, and said in a disappointed way:

"This wound may not be mortal. I cannot kill a wounded man, and I will not leave you here to die."

"What will you do?"

"Take you to the fort."

He led the horse of the wounded man near, collected his weapons, and then placed him, with a wonderful exhibition of strength, in the saddle, and then leaped up behind to support him.

"You will sacrifice yourself," said the officer, in a low tone.

"You will not give the true reason of our meeting, and I will take the risks; but I will not leave you here to die," was the noble response.

And then toward the fort he headed his horse, and, arriving there, he said to the officer of the day:

"I quarreled with Lieutenant Otey and shot him, sir."

He was seized, placed in irons, and a month after was led forth to execution, as the reader has seen.

CHAPTER VI.

A WELL-SET TRAP.

"Well, Cody, I guess that arch renegade, Max Melmer, has given up all idea of capturing Fort Advance, and has returned to his mountain fastnesses," said Colonel Yulee, the day after the arrival of Buffalo Bill at the fort.

"He has doubtless retreated, sir, toward the mountains, though he certainly has struck some of the settlements and smaller outposts, and Captain Vaughan, whom you sent out with a hundred men this morning, will have a battle with them, I am sure, before they reach the foothills."

"Yes; and Vaughan will give a good account of himself, too, you may be sure. He begged hard to take you with him, but I felt I could not permit it, as I had to send you back to General Custer with return dispatches; but, is it not strange about that poor fellow, Sergeant Drew?"

"Yes."

"He was found by the Indians, sir, I guess, and carried off."

"You think he was not dead?"

"They would hardly carry him off if he was dead, but only scalp him and leave the body."

"That is so; but may he not have been wounded, and made his escape before they came up?"

"In that case, he would have returned to the fort, sir."

"Not while under sentence of death."

"He must have heard my words that I had a pardon for him, Colonel Yulee."

"That is so, and it but adds to the mystery."

"How is the officer he wounded, sir?"

"Improving slowly, for he had a very narrow escape. He really seems much better, the surgeon said, since he knows that Drew is dead, or, rather, believes that he is."

After the further conversation it was decided that Buffalo Bill should start back with his dispatches that night. Colonel Yulee presented him with a magnificent horse, one of his own, and an animal that had a name as a racer and one with wonderful staying powers in a long race.

"Whenever you wish a place as chief of scouts in my command, Cody, you have but to ask for it."

"Good-by and good luck to you always," said Colonel Yulee, as the scout mounted his horse to start upon his perilous return journey.

As he rode from the gate the garrison had assembled to see him off, and three rousing cheers were given him.

Once out of the fort, he started on the trail by which he had come. He knew that, because the scouts reported no Indians in the vicinity of Fort Advance that morning, it was no true sign that there were none, for lurking bands in hiding might escape the keenest eyes.

Captain Vaughan had gone out at the head of a hundred troopers, to try and cut the renegade warriors off in their retreat, and this may have driven the redskins from the vicinity of the fort.

Still, Buffalo Bill rode with the caution of a man who always lived with his life in peril, and from which his own nerve alone could save him from death.

He found Hussar, the colonel's gift to him, a splendid animal, with a long stride that carried him rapidly over the ground.

After a ride of several hours he came to a ridge that he must cross, and which was well wooded. It was not very far from where he had met the renegade, on his way to the fort, and he knew that he was very likely to find redskins in the neighborhood, as from that point the trails led to the mountains where they had their villages.

He approached the ridge with great caution; but as he entered it all was deathlike silence, excepting the howling of a wolf, answered by the whining yelp of a coyote.

"Where they are the Indians cannot be, at least near them, so I guess that Red Heart, the renegade, has retreated to the mountains, to await a more fitting time to war on the settlements."

"Oh, but he is a scamp, and I almost wish that I had shot him as his horse went down that day."

The timber through which the scout was riding was heavy, thick with foliage, and intensely dark. But the trail was well marked, and the horse could follow it readily.

By making a circuit of thirty miles the scout could have avoided the ridge; but he was anxious to get back as soon as possible, and also to save his horse the extra long ride; hence he went through by the trail over the ridge.

Coming to the descent, the trail was bordered by large trees, within an arm's reach, as one rode along; but as the path to the mountains led away from the top of the hill, the scout did not expect to find redskins on the south side, and was thinking that he would have no more trouble, when his horse stopped suddenly with a swaying motion that threw him back almost upon his haunches.

"Ho, Hussar, have you lost the trail?" called out the scout, thinking the animal had run upon a clump of wild vines.

"No, the horse is in the trail, but hemmed in with lariats upon all sides. You cannot escape, Buffalo Bill!"

The voice came from behind a tree near.

The response of the scout was to fire a shot in the direction of the voice, and then to wheel his horse and dart back the way he had come; but, to his amazement, the animal had not gone a dozen paces before he was thrown back upon his haunches with a suddenness that very nearly laid him on the ground.

The trail behind him had been closed in the same way it was in front.

Mocking laughter was then heard, and the same voice called out from the blackness:

"It is no use, Buffalo Bill; for you are like a fly in a spider's web."

"I'd know that devilish voice of yours, Max Melmer, among a thousand," said Buffalo Bill, who sat upon his trembling horse, a revolver in each hand.

"Yes, I am the man you so cleverly captured, Buffalo Bill; but now, you are in my power, for I have hundreds of braves around you," was the reply of the white chief.

Though utterly fearless, Buffalo Bill was not foolhardy. He knew that the renegade spoke the truth, for he certainly would not be where he was without his braves in force about him. His coming had evidently been known, and on their fleet Indian ponies the redskins had reported his advance.

The trail was a narrow one, rocky on either side, the timber was heavy, and he could not swerve either way in the darkness. Every foot of it was known to the redskins, and they held him at a disadvantage. The large trees protected them from his shots, even could he have seen where to fire.

In front of him, on either side, half a dozen lariats had been stretched, which completely barred his way. From tree to tree they were made fast, and, crouching in silence in the darkness, his approach had been known to them.

The moment he had ridden into the "Spider's web," lariats had been thrown across the trail behind him and made fast.

He recognized all this in an instant of thought. It was a clever trap, and he had been fairly caught. His horse had shied a little upon entering the net, and gave a snort, but the scout had supposed the trouble to be some skulking wolf.

He now knew that the wolf-howls and coyote-yelping had been made by human throats, and to lead him to think

just what he had, that there were no human beings near.

"Surrender, Bill, or I will give my braves the word, and they will make a cushion for arrows out of you."

"You've got me, that's a fact, you infernal renegade, so I can but submit," responded the scout.

"All right. I'll show you how you are situated," and the white renegade chief ordered a warrior to light the fire, and instantly there blazed up a bright flame, revealing to Buffalo Bill how cleverly he had been caught, and showing him the red fiends about him.

"I cave, Melmer, for you hold a handful of trumps," said Buffalo Bill, in his indifferent way as he beheld the startling spectacle.

"Then hand to that chief every one of your weapons, and see that they do not go off in doing so."

"You had better let me give them to you, Max," suggested Buffalo Bill, with a laugh.

"No, give them to the chief," was the stern reply.

"You gave me yours when I asked for them, Max."

"Look here, Buffalo Bill, you'll find this no joking matter," angrily retorted the renegade.

"I can't see any fun in it, that's a fact; but what are you going to do with me?"

"Take you to my village in the mountains, as soon as I have arranged another matter I have on hand."

"What is that?"

"I do not mind telling you that I have the hundred troopers, sent out from Fort Advance, in as safe a trap as I have you."

"I don't believe it."

"Sunrise will show."

"Captain Vaughan has not been captured, with his men?"

"Not yet, but they will be."

"You think so; but there will be wailing before they are in your dirty camp."

"Give up your arms," impatiently ordered the renegade.

"Let your chief take them."

This the chief did, and then came the command in the Sioux tongue:

"Tie him on his horse and let him be taken to the canyon camp."

The scout was, accordingly, securely bound in his saddle, and the chief, carrying his arms, led the way, while a dozen warriors surrounded the animal as he moved along.

A ride of half a mile back along the hillside and they came to a canyon, where a number of Indians were encamped, cooking buffalo meat upon a few hot coals.

As though obeying an order of the renegade, the chief stepped up to a tall, splendid-looking Indian and said something to him in a tone that Buffalo Bill did not hear.

The Indian, who was a chief, glanced quickly up at the scout, replied to the one who addressed him and took the belt of arms, repeating-rifle and holster revolver of the prisoner.

The chief and his guard then departed, leaving the captive in charge of the one to whom he had given the weapons.

Turning to the braves the tall chief said in his own tongue:

"I have here a paleface prisoner. Remain here, and I will soon return."

He seized the bridle-rein of the scout's horse, as he spoke, and led him back down the canyon.

Reaching the trail that ran near, to the amazement of the scout he said in perfect English:

"Buffalo Bill, Chief Red Heart sent you to me to guard until the morrow, and in the meantime to read the dispatches you carry. It is my intention to set you free, so see, I untie your bonds and restore you your arms. Go to the ridge trail leading to the mountains. Follow it to the Death Canyon, and go quickly. You know it, do you not?"

"I do; but who are you?"

"It matters not; but do you know the cliff trail leading from that canyon?"

"I have passed down it."

"It takes a brave man to do that, for a false step means death."

"I know that."

"In the Death Canyon you will find Captain Grayson Vaughan and one hundred cavalymen. They penetrated the mountains, found the renegade chief and his braves had not retreated, and are lying in ambush for them."

"It is a splendid place to annihilate the Sioux, though, ten to one against the whites if his presence there is not known. But it is, and at dawn Red Heart will have twelve hundred Sioux around the troops, cut them off from all escape and massacre every man."

"Good God, then that arch-fiend was right," cried Buffalo Bill.

"He was, and if you wish to save your friends, go to the canyon by way of the cliff trail, and lead the command back that way to the mountains, and thus to the prairie, for nothing can otherwise save them."

"I thank you from my inmost heart; but tell me who you are?"

"A Sioux."

"I cannot believe it, for——"

"Go! I have warned you," and the Indian chief turned away, while Buffalo Bill replaced his arms, and hastily rode away along the trail, wondering at his strange deliverance by his mysterious friend.

CHAPTER VII.

BEATEN AT THEIR OWN GAME.

There could have been no better place chosen for an ambush than the one in which Captain Vaughan had stationed his troops.

Death's Canyon was well known to the scouts along with the young captain, and when, after a dash into the mountains they discovered that the redskins had not retreated to the fastnesses, it was decided to lie in wait for them on their return.

The canyon was such a place that a hundred men could hold a thousand at their mercy there, and at the same time be in little danger themselves.

But, if the ambush was known to the thousand, the

canyon was an unfortunate place to those lying in wait, as their retreat could be wholly cut off.

Discovering the presence of the troopers, from his Indian scouts, the renegade at once determined to trap the trappers.

He had been foiled in his raid on the settlements, and when he had expected to surprise and capture Fort Advance, he had been beaten back with the loss of a number of braves.

To go back to his villages, with the scalps of a hundred troopers, would be a balm for his disappointment.

So he sent large bodies of braves to guard the three passes to the canyon, intending to reach the point of attack after dawn with five hundred braves.

Those troopers that were not killed in the attack would be shot down as they attempted to escape by the passes.

It was a well-arranged plot, and, but for the capture of Buffalo Bill and his release by his mysterious red friend, would have been successful.

The scout knew the mountain trails about there pretty well, for he had fought the redskins along the ridge, and into the mountains years before with a regiment of gallant soldiers at his back.

He accordingly made his way to the cliff trail, and, so anxious was he to have no mistake occur, and thus not be able to warn the soldiers, he dismounted and led his horse along the perilous path.

It was a ride of half a mile, and he made it in safety, riding into the canyon and into the very midst of the troopers before his presence was suspected.

The scouts stood guard at the other passes, waiting to signal any advance of the Indians, and the horses were all muzzled, to prevent their neighing, and their riders slept near them on their blankets, every man having selected a good position before sunset.

Within a few feet of where the scout entered the canyon, Captain Vaughan was seated, talking with his officers. It was after midnight, and they knew not what moment the Indians might come along.

As the scout appeared before him in the gloom, leading his horse, the young captain sprang to his feet, for he could not mistake that tall, erect form and bearing.

"Cody, you here?"

"Yes, Captain Vaughan, and you must at once order all your men to follow me in perfect silence. Let every man lead his horse, and, for God's sake, be careful, for we will have to round the cliff on a rocky trail not three feet wide."

"But, Cody, what does it mean?"

"I can tell you nothing now, sir, and if you have confidence in me do as I say!"

"Willingly, my brave fellow," and the order was quickly passed along, for every man to at once rise, and, leading his horse, to follow the scout.

Perfect silence was enjoined, and in five minutes after the coming of the scout the column was moving.

Cody led, and next to him came Grayson Vaughan, while an officer stood at the pass to count each man as he went by, and then to bring up the rear.

Like specters they passed along; and once only a man slipped, and his shriek rung out as he was dashed down to death, on the rocks four hundred feet below.

Involuntarily the line halted, but there came the stern order from the leader:

"Come on! to halt is sure death!"

Then it was a horse that stumbled, and he was hurled to death and his shriek of horror was as appalling as the human cry.

"Come on!" came the stern command from Buffalo Bill, as the column again hesitated.

Fearing that the cries of the horse and man might have been heard by the Indians guarding the passes, Buffalo Bill now placed his hands to his lips, and gave the human-like cry of the mountain lion. This he repeated several times, to deceive the redskins as to the first sounds that might have reached their ears.

At last the dread cliff was passed, and the scout and his followers reached the mountain trail, having escaped from the Death Canyon, which had been the scene of many an Indian massacre.

Then in a few words Cody told Captain Vaughan of his capture and what had followed it.

All near him silently grasped his hand in a manner that expressed more than words.

"Now, Captain Vaughan, if you are willing to hit back, and will follow my lead, though I do not wish to stand in the way of your own scouts, I will show you how you can strike the redskins a telling blow."

"You have but to say come, Cody, and we will follow you," was the ready reply.

"It is yet three hours before dawn, when the redskins will find out that you have gone. They will also then discover the way you escaped, and which, known to but few, and so perilous, they did not deem it necessary to guard.

"They will believe, naturally, that you branched off just here, going down into the valley and thence to the fort, fearing with your force to attack fifteen hundred of them.

"It will take them a little time to find out you have not gone to the valley, and then some time more to get their force in motion, so you will have all of four hours' start.

"It is just thirty miles from here to the village of Red Heart, the renegade, and he has not, I feel sure, a hundred warriors left in it.

"There are other villages within a few miles of his, it is true, but, with the force he has, he must have drawn heavily upon them, and if not, they could not catch us."

"And your idea is to strike at his village?"

"Yes, sir; to sweep along the chain of villages under Red Heart, destroy them, shoot down all braves who oppose us, spare all women and children, and run off their herds of ponies."

"Cody, you are a treasure! We will start at once, and as our horses are comparatively fresh, choose your own gait."

The troopers now mounted, and, while the renegade and his braves were awaiting to attack them in the Death Canyon, they were miles away, riding rapidly toward the Indian villages.

Knowing the mountains as he did, and just where the villages were situated, Buffalo Bill held on his way, determined to strike the home of the white chief, Red Heart, first.

"Do not spare your horses, for there are plenty of fresh ones in the redskin camps," Cody announced; so the rapid pace was kept up.

It was not yet dawn, when, like a whirlwind, the hundred gallant cavalymen dashed into the Indian village.

Taken wholly by surprise as they were, the scene beggars description. Warriors were shot down, tepees were set on fire, provisions were burned, and women and children, aroused from sleep, flew to hiding-places in the mountains.

Half an hour of horror, and with the flames of the Indian village lighting their way, the troopers mounted on fresh horses, and driving along a large herd with them, swept through the mountains on their work of destruction, and as the sun arose, a second redskin camp was ridden into and quickly destroyed.

A third soon followed, after a sharp-fought battle of a few minutes, where the braves, warned by fugitives from the other villages, made a bold stand.

Here warriors and soldiers bit the dust; but the irresistible whirlwind swept on, and passed down the mountain trail toward the plains.

Behind them were ruin and death, and with them they carried their dead and wounded, and hundreds of captured horses and Indian ponies.

"They cannot overtake you now, Captain Vaughan, and your scouts can lead you by the best trails back to the fort," said Buffalo Bill, who was now mounted upon a fine iron-gray, and led Hussar and another horse.

"And you, Cody?"

"I go on from here, sir, with my dispatches for General Custer, and I shall report your gallant work of beating the Indians at their own game."

"And tell him that it was through you it was done, Bill; but you shall be remembered in reports from Fort Advance, I assure you."

"Good-by."

The scout rode away, raising his sombrero to the cheers that rung along the line for him, and when he had disappeared in the timber, with his two extra horses following, the brave troopers once more moved on toward the fort.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWO CHIEFS.

After having sent his much-prized captive to the chief who so summarily disposed of him, Red Heart, the Renegade, devoted himself to setting his warriors in motion.

It had been explained to them just how they were to attack the cavalry in the canyon, and that large forces of their comrades were already getting into position to cut off all escape.

Having arranged all his plans with grim satisfaction, while his redskin braves were moving noiselessly into the positions assigned to them, Red Heart sought the temporary camp of the chief to whom he had sent Buffalo Bill.

He found that that chief had also sent his braves to their posts, and was awaiting his coming.

A fire still burned in the canyon, and the chief he visited was pacing to and fro.

"Well, Melmer, I am waiting for you, as you see,"

said the chief, speaking in perfect English, though the fire showed that his face was as hideously painted as any of the braves, and, if there was white blood in his veins, it was certainly not visible as he then appeared.

"So, I see, major; but I am hungry, so I hope you saved me some supper?"

"Yes, there you will find some broiled buffalo steaks and a tin cup of coffee, which I put aside for you; but have your warriors moved?"

"Yes, they are all now on the way to surround the cañon, and not a man of those troopers there will ever escape.

"But was not that a grand capture I made to-night?"

"You refer to Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, and I shall burn him at the stake."

"I supposed that was your intention, when you sent him to me to guard for you."

"Yes, I will at last have my revenge; but where is he, major?"

"I set him free."

The renegade sprung to his feet with a cry of rage, while he hissed forth:

"You set him free?"

"Yes, Melmer."

"Do you dare tell me this?"

"Why not tell you the truth? He was too good a man to kill in cold blood."

"By Heaven! but you shall suffer for this in his stead."

"Do not say what you do not mean, Melmer."

"I swear it."

"Bah! we are man to man here in this cañon, and ever since you entered it I have had you covered—see!"

The renegade had not noticed before, that beneath the blanket the chief held in his lap, his hand grasped a revolver that was leveled at him, cocked, and a finger on the trigger.

"Would you kill one who has been your friend, major?" he said, in a tone of reproach.

"I saved you from the gallows, Melmer, and in return you gave me a shelter among your braves, and made me a chief; so we are quits, and I set Buffalo Bill free because I did not intend he should be tortured to death. Now if you don't wish me to remain with you, say so, and I am ready to go my way at once."

"I am afraid of you, for you might turn traitor at any time."

"You are a fine fellow to talk of treachery; but if you mean it is treachery in me to keep a splendid fellow like Buffalo Bill from your fiendish revenge, then I am a traitor."

"And you might do the same thing again."

"Perhaps."

"Then, major, you and I must part, for, though I have the power to cause your death, for the sake of what you saved me from, I will spare you."

"Now, Melmer, you are inveigling yourself into the thought that you are kind to me, whereas you are in my power, as you have not a brave within a mile, and I could kill you before you could draw a weapon. I sought shelter with you, yes, and you were glad to give it. Now I no longer seek it, so we will at once part."

"The horse you gave me was one you got from Buffalo Bill, you told me, and a splendid animal he is, though still fagged by the hard ride the scout gave him. I shall keep him to remind me that I saved his former master from your cruel hands.

"You can go now, Melmer, before you force me to kill you."

The renegade was livid with rage, yet felt that he dared make no effort to kill the man who so boldly faced him.

So he turned quickly toward his horse, sprung into his saddle, saying, savagely:

"One of these days I will hold the winning hand, and then I'll forget what mercy is."

"You never knew what it is, Max Melmer," was the retort, as the renegade rode slowly away.

Once he had left the cañon, he pressed on more rapidly, and coming to the spot where his warriors were lying in ambush, he called a chief aside and said:

"Let the Feather Foot take twelve good warriors with him to the cañon where was my camp, and capture the traitor who was my friend."

A moment after Feather Foot and his braves were on their way to the cañon where the renegade had left the man whom he called a traitor.

There was a double disappointment in store for Red Heart the Renegade, for the chief Feather Foot came back after an absence of two hours and reported that the one he had been sent to capture could not be found.

He had doubtless known the character of the renegade too well to tarry an instant longer than was necessary, after the departure of a man who could readily put a hundred braves upon his trail.

Which way he had gone not even Feather Foot could discover, for there were hundreds of horses' tracks in the mountains, and to pick out the trail which would be the right one was more than even Indian cunning and skill could do.

So the band returned, and Feather Foot made his report.

He fairly lost his stoicism when he saw the rage into which it threw the great white chief, and he was glad to withdraw from his presence.

But for the desire not to alarm the intended victims he deemed safely in the cañon, Red Heart would have uttered an oath both loud and deep; but as it was, his suppressed rage was terrible for the Indians to witness, and they feared their white chief as they would a madman.

When the dawn began to break, the anticipation of his surprise and victory over the troopers caused the renegade to become calm, and he issued his orders with promptness to begin the attack.

A moment after the rattle of firearms and yells of a thousands Indians, that rung in many echoes through the hills, sent the birds and wild beasts flying and running in terror.

But the gloom of the cañon, lighted up by the flashes of the rifles and revolvers of the redskins, showed that there was no enemy there.

Maddened at the sight the Indians pressed recklessly down into the cañon to see if their eyes deceived them.

But no soldiers were visible, and no firing from the

several passes showed that the foe was certainly retreating.

No, it was very soon found out that the enemy had gone, and, as the daylight brightened, the trail the soldiers had taken was seen.

Brave as they were the Indians cared not to take that dangerous pathway around the cliff, where the light of day would reveal what the night had hidden from the troopers' eyes.

As white as rage could make his bronzed skin, with eyes that glared ferociously, and uttering oaths that were appalling, the renegade was determined to strike a blow along the line of settlements to gain his revenge.

But just then there arrived an Indian scout, who reported that the band of cavalry had taken the trail to the mountain, and had not turned off into the valley and thus gone back to the fort.

The white chief heard how he had hidden among the rocks, within a few feet of the trail, and seen the soldiers go by at a rapid canter, directly toward the villages in the mountains.

Then he had come with all his speed to tell the Red Heart.

Words cannot depict the scene that followed, for one and all were wild with fury, and, mounting their ponies, led by the renegade, they started in full run for their villages.

Runners were sent back to bring all of the warriors who were on the warpath, and thus a straggling line of braves was stretched out for miles through the mountains.

When the renegade drew near his village he passed frightened women and children, and braves hastily told him of the work of destruction.

Arriving upon the scene, hardly three hours after the departure of the soldiers, the desolation and destruction made him gnash his teeth with rage and gnaw his lips until they bled.

Vowing vengeance, he sprung from his fagged-out horse, and called for his braves to mount fresh ponies and follow him in chase of the foe who had dealt him the same cruel blow that he had meant to deal the settlers on the plains.

But a few broken down old ponies were all that had been left by the troopers, and the renegade chief had but to remain inactive while he listened to the tales of woe from the other villages.

By twos, sixes and scores his braves were arriving on their tired ponies, and each new arrival added to the pandemonium, and it was hours before the calm came after the storm.

Dead and wounded braves, scattered women and children, burned homes and provisions destroyed, and furs, robes and ponies carried off, remained as evidence of the terrible blow that had been struck, and which was yet merciful in comparison to the red deeds of those same savage Sioux visited each year upon the frontier settlements.

To think of revenge then was out of the question, for the dead were to be buried, the wounded cared for, tepees built, and the hunters must go forth to find food for the women and children.

But the deed should not be forgotten, and savage

rows of vengeance were made against the band of gallant soldiers, who had invaded the fastnesses of the redskins, fought superior numbers, and, with their captured braves, were retreating toward the fort.

Hampered by their dead and wounded, and the large herd of horses and ponies, not to speak of the splendid robes and furs, which they had brought off by the hundred, the troopers were not able to press on very rapidly.

But they kept steadily on, halting only for food and a short rest, and soon after sunrise of the following day arrived in sight of the fort.

The "long roll" was sounded, for the sentinel at first supposed that each one of the large herd of ponies held an Indian warrior; but when the troopers were seen cheers rang out to welcome them, and as Grayson Vaughan, utterly worn out, slipped slowly from his saddle to the ground, the welcome that he got made his heart glad; but disclaiming the credit himself, he said over and over again:

"I owe it to Buffalo Bill, but for him none of us would be here to tell the tale," and Grayson Vaughan told the story of his escape from Death Cañon, as the reader knows it.

CHAPTER IX.

A SECRET DETECTIVE.

When Buffalo Bill returned to the garrison where General Custer held command, those who saw him approach were convinced that he had been unable to make the perilous ride to Fort Advance and had therefore been forced to come back.

It was seen that he had three horses with him instead of two that he had started with, and as he came nearer some one observed that not one of the three animals had he carried with him.

The scouts, over whom Buffalo Bill held command, were more deeply interested in his return, for they had one and all declined to go.

Had it been possible for him to reach Fort Advance, they wondered?

No, that was impossible, for he had only been gone four days.

And so they watched his coming and speculated on what he had done, while some ungenerous spirits, for their own sakes, hoped he had not met with success.

"Ho, Chief Cody; did you get through?" called out a scout, as he came within hail.

"Yes, Jack."

"You got to Fort Advance?"

"I did."

Three cheers at once rung out for the brave scout, and they brought General Custer to the door of his quarters.

"Bravo, Bill; back again so soon?" he cried.

"Yes, sir."

"And what luck?" and the general hardly dared ask the question, so fearful was he that Buffalo Bill had not gone through.

"I have dispatches for you, sir, from Colonel Yulee," was the response.

"Give me your hand and sit down and tell me all about your trip."

"But you have made wonderful time there and back."

"I did not tarry much on the road, general; but I was an instant too late to save the poor sergeant."

"An instant, you say?"

"Yes, sir, for as I dashed up, the order was given to fire."

"I called out that I had his pardon, but several of the men unintentionally drew trigger, and he fell under the fire."

"Poor fellow."

"I did my best, general."

"I know, I feel that; but let me glance at these dispatches and then tell me of your trip, for, from reports coming in, I know that the redskins are all along the border, and that arch-renegade, Red Heart, is leading them."

"Ah! if I could catch that fellow, it would be a sorry day for him."

Buffalo Bill thought so, too; but he waited until General Custer had read the dispatches and again turned to him.

"Bill, you have made a wonderful record since you left here four days ago, and now that you are safely back again I am glad that you went."

"Now tell me, from beginning to end, all about your desperate ride."

The scout obeyed, and when he had finished his story, General Custer sent for some of the officers of his command, and had him repeat the story, which he did in the modest way natural to him when speaking of his own exploits.

"Bill, you would win the command of a regiment, if it were not that you cannot be spared as chief of scouts, in which capacity you serve the army as no other man has or can, in the same position; but here I am keeping you up, when you are haggard from the want of rest and sleep, so go to your quarters, and you need not report for duty for two days," and Buffalo Bill was very glad to seek the rest he needed, for even his iron frame had begun to feel the terrible strain he had been forced to undergo.

As the days went by the scouts brought in word that the severe punishment given the Indians by the troops from Fort Advance had caused them to return to their fastnesses, from which they would doubtless not come forth for months.

It was some weeks after Buffalo Bill's memorable ride to Fort Advance that he was sent for to come at once to the general's quarters.

"Cody, I have here some dispatches from Colonel Yulee, and, after telling me that the frontier is comparatively quiet, as regards marauding bands of Indians, he goes on to state that he has a new evil to deal with."

"A new evil, sir?"

"Yes, and it is in the shape of road agents, a band of whom infest the half-dozen stage-trails going west."

"First they are upon one trail, then on another, and though he has sent half a dozen different commands out upon the search, they have not been able to find the outlaws, or where their camp is."

"Colonel Yulee has some excellent scouts, general, and they should be able to place them," said Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, and yet the mountain country is very wild there, and there are now some seven stage lines running to different points, with considerable distance to travel; and, not having been able to put a check upon them, the colonel writes me a special letter to allow you to go and undertake the work.

"It will make a detective of you for the while, Cody, and if you consent I will give you the papers as a special officer of the Government Secret Service; but, of course, it rests with you to say whether you will do so or not, as I will not order you on duty outside of your legitimate calling."

After a moment of thought, the scout said, slowly: "I will undertake the work, general. When shall I start?"

"As soon as you are ready."

"I will be ready within the hour, and Texas Jack can take my place as Chief of Scouts while I am gone."

An hour after, Buffalo Bill rode away on his secret mission.

He rode his fine horse Hussar, and carried with him the two other animals, and good ones they were, taken on the raid upon the Indian village of which Red Heart, the renegade, was chief.

One of the horses was used as a pack animal, and the other trotted along by his side, free from saddle or bridle, and both were so well trained that they followed without being led.

There was no need for pushing on rapidly, and toward the evening of the second day out, the scout was looking for a good camping-place, when he spied far off upon the prairie a party of horsemen.

They were coming toward him, and he at once leveled his field glass, which he always kept with him, expecting that he would find them a band of marauding redskins.

It was yet twenty-five miles to Fort Advance, and if it came to a chase he knew his horses were good for the distance, as he had not fagged them, while his repeating rifle would put him on more even terms with the enemy.

"They are soldiers," he said, as he leveled the glass, and so he went on without further thought regarding them, to a good camping-place on the banks of a small stream not far distant.

Arriving there, he dismounted and was about to stake out his horses, when he saw that the soldiers were coming toward him at a rapid gallop.

Thinking they were from Fort Advance, and that they might need his services for some reason, he decided to wait their arrival before stripping his horses, though he went on with the work of collecting wood for a fire.

He was returning with a heavy log on one shoulder and a bundle of brush under the other, when up dashed the soldiers, and, sweeping around him with remarkable precision, he found himself in a circle, and twelve revolvers leveled at his head.

"You are a prisoner, sir!"

The scout was fairly caught, for he had expected no trouble from men in uniform; but now he discovered that these twelve horsemen were not exactly uniformed as was the United States Cavalry.

They all were mounted upon black horses, and the bridles and saddles were military.

Their uniform was of army blue, the pants worn in top-boots, heavily spurred, they carried sabers, holster pistols and revolvers in their belts.

They wore jackets trimmed with yellow, and gauntlet gloves covered their hands.

But that which surprised the scout most was that upon their heads were brass helmets, with the visor down, so that their faces were completely concealed, a cape of woven wire falling from the lower edge of the helmet upon the shoulders, wholly concealing the neck.

"Well, pards, has there been a masked ball in these parts?" said Buffalo Bill, dropping his load of wood and gazing with curiosity upon the twelve masked horsemen.

"You are my prisoner, sir, so hand over your weapons, mount your horse and go with us," said the one who had before spoken.

"May I ask who you are, sir, and to what command you belong?" said the scout, coolly.

"We are the Masked Hussars, sir."

"You look it, but to what command do you belong in the army?"

"We do not belong to the United States Army."

"Oh, a militia company among the settlers, out on a scouting expedition against the redskins, and wearing those brass kettles upon your heads to keep from being scalped?"

"We belong to no militia, sir, we are the Masked Hussars; in other words, pirates of the prairies, and you are our game."

"I see; road agents?"

And not a muscle of the scout's face changed.

"Yes."

"And what do you intend to do with me?"

"That is for our chief to say."

"Ah, you are not the captain, then?"

"I am not."

"Who is?"

"Major Mephisto."

"I have not had a college education, pard, but is Mephisto a polite name for the devil?"

"About that," and the Hussar laughed.

"Then I cave, so take me along with you," was the response.

The horses of the scout were then brought up, he was disarmed, and mounting, he was placed between the one who had held the conversation with him and another of the band.

Not another had spoken a word, even when ordered by their leader.

The two extra horses of the scout trotted close behind him, and following came the other ten Masked Hussars.

In perfect silence they rode away over the prairie through the gathering twilight, and all efforts on the part of Buffalo Bill to draw his captors into conversation were utterly useless.

He saw that they were heading toward the mountains, and not in the direction of Fort Advance, leaving it on the right.

What they would do with him he could not imagine.

He had been the bitter foe of the road agents in the past, on the Overland trails, and had broken up several

of their bands, and he knew that he was bitterly hated by them.

But this was a party he had never heard of, and they certainly appeared to turn out in style.

They had captured him in a very neat way, and, as he rode along, it came to him that his mission in coming to the far frontier had been to find the mysterious road agents of whom Colonel Yulee had written.

"Oh, I've found them," he said to himself, with a laugh.

Then, as the two men riding with him refused to answer any questions, or to speak upon any subject, he said, in his off-hand way:

"You are about as pleasant company as a gang of ghosts."

One of his captors laughed lightly, but uttered no word, and they pressed on as before.

After a ride of a couple of hours, they entered the foothills and, halting, the scout was bound and securely blindfolded. Following an ascending trail, they came to a dense thicket of pines.

Penetrating into the midst of the thicket, by a narrow trail, that forced them to go on in single file, they soon came to a glimmer ahead and a cabin was visible in a small clearing, the trees that had been cut down having been so placed as to form a barrier.

The trail they were on seemed to be the only entrance to the little clearing, which was half an acre in size.

A fire burned before the cabin door, and beside it was a man cooking supper.

He wore the uniform and helmet of the Masked Hussars.

As they rode up to the door of the cabin a man appeared, who was also in uniform and helmet mask; but gold braid instead of worsted adorned his jacket, and his whole appearance was on a grander scale than the others.

"Well, captain, what luck?" asked the one who stood in the cabin door.

The one he addressed was he who had been the spokesman in the conversation held with the scout, and his rank of captain was doubtless marked by a skull and crossbones in gold thread on his left sleeve.

The one who had ridden on the left of the scout had the same device upon his sleeve, only worked in silver thread.

"I have a prisoner here, Major Mephisto, who says he is known as Buffalo Bill," was the reply of the "captain."

"What! Buffalo Bill your prisoner?" cried Major Mephisto, stepping quickly from the cabin and advancing to the side of the scout, who had not been seen by him before, as he was hidden by the Masked Hussars who surrounded him.

When the man who had been called Major Mephisto advanced to the side of Buffalo Bill, he glanced up into his face and asked:

"Are you he whom men call Buffalo Bill?"

"I am."

"You are Chief of Scouts, under General Custer?"

"Yes."

"When did you leave General Custer?"

"Two nights ago."

"Where were you going when my Hussars captured you?"

"To Fort Advance."

"With dispatches?"

"Yes," answered the scout, knowing the utter uselessness of denying anything that by searching him they could find out.

"Will you return then to General Custer?"

"I cannot tell, for I may be sent to the line of outposts with dispatches."

"How was it that you were captured by my Hussars?"

"I saw them off on the prairie, as I was going into camp for the night, supposed they were honest soldiers, and when they rode up they caught me with my arms full of wood, for I suspected no treachery."

"Had I known what they were before they got near me, I think I should have let them fight if they wanted me."

"I am sure that you would, from all I have heard of you; but I am not going to detain you, Buffalo Bill."

"Does this mean that I can go?"

"Yes after you have had supper, which is about ready."

So saying the chief stepped forward and took the bandage from the scout's eyes, and the bonds from his hands.

"You are the king bee, sure enough," said Buffalo Bill, as he saw the elegant makeup of Major Mephisto, and he added:

"I supposed that pilgrim you called captain was lying to me when he said he was not the chief."

"No, I am chief here; but come, have your supper, and then my men will blindfold you again and carry you out upon the prairie, when you will be free."

"May I ask why you allow me to go?"

"For reasons of my own which I cannot explain."

"All right, major, I am not curious, as long as I can go; but I would like to offer you a piece of advice."

"Well, sir?"

"Give up robbing on the road and take to an honest calling, for sooner or later you will get roped."

"I will take my chances; but supper is ready, so join me, please."

They entered the cabin, which was large and evidently the abode of all the men, for a number of bunks were along the wall.

The table was neatly set, with clean cloth, and the tinware shone like silver.

The man who was cooking served the dishes, and the scout enjoyed the meal with Major Mephisto, no one else sitting down.

The scout was in hopes he would raise the visor of his helmet, but he only did so to the mouth, revealing the firm chin alone.

The supper was a remarkably good one for camp, and the scout enjoyed it, and was then offered a good cigar by his outlaw guest.

Then Buffalo Bill signified a willingness to depart, and, mounting his horse, he was blindfolded, bound, and, accompanied by six of the Hussars as a guard, he left the cabin in the thicket.

If any of the Hussars had been inclined to talk to the scout, he did not give them a chance, for he remained perfectly silent.

But his thoughts were busy, and he counted every foot-

fall of his horse, so that he could get an idea of the distance to the cabin from where he would be released.

After leaving the hills and a ride of an hour upon the prairie, the scout was brought to a halt, the bandage was removed from his eyes, his arms were freed, the led horses turned loose, and, without a word, his guard rode away.

"Good-night, gentlemen, and thank you," called out the scout.

But no response was returned, and the Hussars rode on.

After gazing at them for a little while, the scout looked up to the stars, took his bearings, and then, as he moved away followed by his other horses, he said:

"Now those pilgrims think they are fooling me nicely, while I know they are riding away from and not toward their cabin.

"They meandered about this prairie in the space of a quarter of a mile to make me believe they were taking me quite a distance away from the hills; but I wasn't fooled worth a cent.

"I counted the steps from the cabin until we struck level ground, and I will be able to find that little cabin again, and I shall do so, only I will take company with me.

"That Major Mephisto is the most gentlemanly outlaw I ever met, and I am indebted to him for getting me out of a bad scrape.

"But I'll have to hunt him down all the same, as that is my business now.

"Come, Hussar, we have gotten away from your namesakes, and the fort lies about yonder, and we'll go on there to-night I guess," and the scout turned the head of his horse in the direction that he knew Fort Advance lay, just as the six Hussars who had been his guard, believing they were out of sight, turned back toward their retreat.

But the scout had his glass upon them, and he laughed as he saw them going back to the cabin, thinking they were out of his sight.

"These glass eyes are a great thing," the scout said, with a chuckle, as he replaced the field glass in its case and moved more briskly on over the prairie, for he wished to reach the fort by sunrise.

The sun was just peeping over the prairie as Buffalo Bill came in full view of Fort Advance.

The Stars and Stripes went fluttering up to the top of the flagstaff, and was saluted with the morning gun, the puff of white smoke coming along on the breeze toward the scout, as though to give him welcome.

As he drew nearer and was recognized, the soldiers began to cheer him, and the first one to grasp his hand was Captain Grayson Vaughan.

"I am glad to see you, Cody, and the colonel will be, too, for he has been expecting you."

"Come to his quarters at once," said the handsome young officer, and he led the scout to headquarters, where Colonel Yulee gave him a warm welcome.

"Just in time for breakfast, Cody, so go in my spare room yonder and brush up, and then we will hear all the news."

The scout gave the colonel the dispatches he had for him, and soon came out feeling quite fresh after his night ride.

Colonel Yulee glanced over the dispatches, and as the

three sat down to breakfast, for Captain Vaughan messed with his commander, he said:

"Well, Cody, I am very glad that General Custer was able to spare you, and that you were willing to come."

"Yes, colonel, I could not but come and serve you, if it is in my power to do so; but what seems to be the trouble, sir?"

"Road agents."

"I expected they would begin to get in their fine work as soon as the stages began to run through this country, for some travelers carry valuable pickings."

"Yes, but these knights of the road are a peculiar set, and their chief work is against the army."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, and they call themselves the Masked Hussars, wearing a uniform and brass helmets.

"How many there are I have been unable to find out, but they appear upon the various Overland trails, at the most unlooked-for places and unexpected times, and they are certainly under the leadership of a bold, daring and skillful man."

"Have they done much damage, sir?"

"Well, they have captured a paymaster, who had some ten thousand in money with him, and then let him go without robbing him, strange to say; but they took from one stage a courier, who was returning to the fort after a short leave, and deliberately, in the view of all the passengers in the stage, they led him out for execution and boldly shot him."

"This is becoming serious, colonel."

"Yes, Cody, for, as I said, their enmity seems to be especially against the army.

"It is to have you find out their haunts, their force, and the best way to attack them, that I asked you of the general, and I feel that if any man can do so, you are the one."

"Thank you, sir; but did they give no reason for their execution of this soldier?"

"None, other than that the leader made him bare his left arm, and then he looked at it carefully.

"Then he said:

"This man must die,' and he detailed twelve men to fire upon him, and they did their work well."

"Was there any mark upon the unfortunate man's arm?"

"That we do not know, for the Masked Hussars carried him off for burial, and the stage driver told Captain Vaughan of the affair as it occurred."

"It is strange, colonel, very strange," said the scout.

"You can think of no solution of it?"

"It looks to me, sir, like a clear case of revenge."

"So it seems to me, Cody."

"Were other soldiers stopped by these Hussars?"

"Yes, several of them."

"Any man now in camp?"

"Yes, two."

"Will you send for them, colonel?"

Captain Vaughan called the orderly, and the two men soon appeared.

"Mr. Cody wishes to ask you a few questions, men," said the colonel.

They saluted, and turned to the scout, who asked:

"Were you stopped on the Overland by the road agents calling themselves the Masked Hussars?"

"I was, sir."

"Yis, sur," were the replies.

"Were you together at the time?"

The men answered in the negative.

"Where were you stopped by the Hussars, my man?" asked the scout of one of them.

"I was returning from a furlough, sir, and rode on the stage, up on the box with the driver.

"The Hussars suddenly surrounded us, riding splendidly and not uttering a word.

"The leader then rode up to the coach and glanced in, and then up at me.

"Get down," he said to me.

"I obeyed, and he told me to take off my coat.

"I did so, and then he made me roll up the left sleeve of my shirt, and he glanced calmly at it.

"Then he said:

"Mount the box again, and consider yourself in luck.

"Drive on."

"That was all?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you, my man?"

"I was afther bein' a courier, sur, an' I rid right inter ther plagued varmint.

"Halt!" says they.

"Halt it is," says I.

"Thin, sur, they made me do that same as Corporal Varney did, roll up me sleeve, an' the captain loked at it very swately. Thin, says he: 'You're afther bein' in great luck, my darlin'.' Says I: 'Thank your Riverince.' Thin he tells me to go, an' I wint."

"All right, my man, thank you."

The soldiers left the quarters, and Colonel Yulee said:

"Well, Cody?"

"They do not seem to be robbers, colonel."

"That is so."

"It is my opinion, as I said, that it is a case of revenge."

"It looks so; but I cannot permit this halting of coaches and interfering with soldiers, and you will try and solve the mystery?"

"Yes, sir; but I have already met these Hussars, and I know where I can find their retreat," and Buffalo Bill told of his experience with Major Mephisto, and the colonel and Captain Vaughan listened with the greatest surprise.

"And you will not let this act toward you, Cody, influence you as to your going on the trail of these men?"

"No, indeed, colonel, for their acts are lawless, halting people, and, as you said, executing one man, and I will be ready, sir, whenever you say to strike their trail," was the determined response of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HUSSARS' TRAIL.

When it was decided that he should begin to run down the human game, Buffalo Bill was anxious to get to work, and he arranged with Captain Vaughan to meet him with twenty good troopers at a point known to one of the fort scouts, who would guide them to the place.

Having decided upon this, the scout went to his quar-

ters to get several hours' sleep, and after dinner he rode away at a gallop, mounted upon one of Colonel Yulee's horses, for he wished to give his own a needed rest.

Straight as the crow flies, he went to the spot where he had been left by the Hussar guard the night before, and almost instantly found the trail of his horses and that of the animals ridden by the silent men who had been his escort.

With unerring skill he followed the winding path to the foothills and then up to the pine thicket until he came, just at sunset, to the narrow opening which led to the cabin.

Many a man, and Indians at that, would have lost the trail when it came to the thick pine straw that strewed the ground, where no track could be made.

But Buffalo Bill had won a reputation as a phenomenal trailer, and he now showed that he had deserved it, for he sat looking about him for some time, his eyes resting upon every object near, and then he dismounted and searched the ground most carefully.

At last, as though satisfied, he moved on, and thus it was that he came unerringly to the place where the Hussars had turned off into the thicket.

There was nothing to mark it as the diverging point that an ordinary eye would have noted, but Buffalo Bill's vision quickly sighted what he felt sure were two landmarks.

One was a tree uprooted by the wind, the other was a tall pine which had been struck by lightning long before.

Passing between these two, he soon saw that the thicket became very dense, and narrowed to a small space was the trail leading to the cabin.

It was, as I have said, just sunset when he reached the point where he was sure he was right, and he then hastened back as he had come and rode rapidly out upon the prairie to the spot, a small timber motte, where he had appointed the meeting with Captain Vaughan and his troopers.

They were already there, and Captain Vaughan sat talking with Captain Talbot, who had volunteered to come with him, Surgeon Frank Powell, and the two fort scouts, when Buffalo Bill suddenly stepped up to their side.

"Cody, we were just talking of you; but I did not hear the picket challenge you," said Grayson Vaughan.

"They did not challenge me, sir, because I slipped in between them.

"I noted Indian trails on the prairie this afternoon, so was not sure but that some might be here, so I staked my horse out and came afoot.

"I saw the pickets, but it was too dark to see if they were Indians or soldiers, so I came in between them."

"You are a mysterious fellow, Cody; but now you have come, let us have supper and then what is to be done?"

"Move on the enemy, sir."

"You have found their retreat, then?"

"Yes, sir, or rather the trail that will lead to it."

"And yet you were blindfolded when you were taken there and brought back?"

"I was not blindfolded to-day, Captain," said the scout, with a smile.

"So it seems; but dare we light a fire?"

"What do you say, Hawk-Eye Harry?" and Buffalo Bill turned to one of the fort scouts, a handsome young fel-

low, who had won his name from his remarkably keen eyesight.

"I would say cold grub, Buffalo Bill," was the reply of the young scout, who seemed pleased that he had been asked.

"And you, Poker Paul?" asked Buffalo Bill of the other scout, who had the reputation of being the champion poker player, Indian fighter and shot at Fort Advance, and was as fine a fellow as he was daring.

"Cold vittals suits me better than hot lead does, and, as you says, Bill, thar may be some reds prowlin' round ter take a draw on us."

"Then we will eat a cold supper and then start," said Captain Vaughan.

"What is your exact force, captain?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Well, I have sixteen men, a sergeant, corporal, and our two scouts.

"Then there are Captain Talbot, Surgeon Powell, you and I, and Boss, my negro cook, twenty-five all told."

"About two to one, if I saw all their force, and enough to whip them if they equal us in numbers," the scout replied.

The men then were given their supper of cold venison and bread, after which the order was given to mount.

Buffalo Bill and Captain Vaughan led, the fort scouts came next, then Surgeon Powell and Captain Talbot, followed by the troopers, and with Boss bringing up the rear with two pack horses, for it was not known how long the party would be away from the fort, and Captain Vaughan always went prepared, never caring to get out of rations or go without shelter where it could be avoided.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

Between the fort scouts there was not the slightest rivalry felt toward Buffalo Bill.

One and all of them looked upon him as "the man of the border."

Whatever they might think of their own prowess and skill, they yielded without a murmur to what they knew was his superior judgment.

Had it become a question between Colonel Yulee and Buffalo Bill as to what was best to be done in a case, the fort scouts would have sided with Cody.

So it was that Hawk-Eye Harry and Poker Paul were glad to have been selected for the expedition with the renowned plainsman.

He was their beau ideal of what a borderman should be, and his handsome face, splendid form and generous nature made him one to admire and long to have as a friend.

Many a poor scout had been helped by his ready hand, and it was well known that Buffalo Bill would risk his life as quickly to serve an ordinary scout in deadly peril as he would for a general.

"Pard, Bill Cody knows jist what he are about," said Poker Paul to Hawk-Eye Harry, as the two rode along together.

"He does, fer a fact, Paul, and you bet the colonel did a wise thing when he sent him to hunt down the Masked Hussars.

"Here we have been, with a dozen good men, trying to catch on to them for a month and more, and up comes Bill, and his good fortune sticks to him, for he's going right to where they hang out now," replied Hawk-Eye Harry.

"I'm glad I'm along, pard."

"So am I, Poker Paul."

"We've got the fightin'est crowd I ever seen this time, fer every man of the troopers Capt'in Vaughan picked out; you know what the sergeant and corporal is; Capt'in Talbot would rather fight than eat, and Surgeon Powell are ther match fer any man I ever seen, and deserves ther name o' ther Fightin' Doctor."

"You are right, Paul, and there is Captain Vaughan himself, who is a dandy in a fight; Buffalo Bill is a whole team, and we ourselves are no slouches when it comes to that."

"Yes, Hawk-Eye, we is well primed, and when we tackles the enemy fur will fly quite peert."

This conversation between the two fort scouts shows the feeling existing toward Buffalo Bill, and also the confidence they had in their officers and comrades, not forgetting themselves.

Reaching the foothills, Buffalo Bill made a flank movement, knowing that he would strike the trail leading into the pine thicket.

"But you go out of your way, do you not?" said Captain Vaughan.

"Yes, sir, but if I was seen this afternoon, a pleasant little surprise-party might await us in the way of an ambush."

"Always right, Bill, so go ahead."

So well did he calculate that he came out at a point which was within a few rods of the lightning-riven tree, as a short search soon revealed.

The troopers now got their weapons ready, the order was single file, and, giving the rein to his horse, the scout knew he would take him where he had been in the afternoon.

As they neared the cabin, a voice was heard in song, singing the old ballad of the Texan Ranger.

The line halted and listened, and then, as they moved forward once more, there suddenly came a flash and report, and a bullet whizzed by the head of Buffalo Bill.

"Forward!" cried the scout, and he spurred forward, followed by the troopers, with a cheer.

A shout of warning was then heard ahead, and as the horsemen reached the clearing the door of the cabin opened wide and a man darted within, when it was closed once more.

But within that instant the door was open the attacking party caught sight of a dozen forms in the cabin.

Again the troopers cheered as they divided in two single columns, and dashed around the cabin, completely surrounding it in a moment of time.

But the cheer of the troopers, who felt sure of their prey, was answered from within by defiant cries, and then all was silent.

"Ho, pards, you are caught in your trap, so down with your weapons and march out, if you wish quarter shown you," called out Buffalo Bill, whom Captain Vaughan had told to demand the surrender of the Hussars.

No answer came to the summons, and again the scout cried:

"Come men, open your door before we break it in."

Still a deathlike silence followed his words.

"I will order the men in front to fire through the door," said Captain Vaughan.

"It may loosen the tongues of some of them, sir, by stilling the tongues of others," replied the scout.

"Six of you men ride closer to the cabin and at the word fire into the door."

The men obeyed, and then Captain Vaughan commanded:

"Fire!"

The carbines flashed at the command, and the bullets went tearing into the heavy wooden door.

Still no response came.

"Ho, within! I shall fire again if you do not reply!" cried Captain Vaughan.

But no answer came.

"If we could get a heavy log, captain, we could break the door in," said Buffalo Bill.

Hawk-Eye Harry and four troopers were sent in search of a log, while the rest kept their places around the cabin.

"They are up to some game I cannot solve," said Buffalo Bill.

"Nor I," answered Captain Talbot.

"They have got some trap laid for us, I think," Surgeon Powell remarked.

"Ha! see that light," cried Buffalo Bill, and a red glare was visible through small crevices in the logs.

"The cabin is on fire," said Surgeon Frank Powell, as a small flame shot out between the walls and the roof.

"Now they will be forced out, so, sergeant, call the men back."

The sergeant placed a bugle to his lips, for he was acting as bugler, and blew the recall, which Hawk-Eye Harry answered from a distance with a shout, and soon after they came back at a run.

The flames were now eating along the edge of the roof within, and had broken out in several places.

But still those within made no sign or sound.

The attacking party now sat upon their horses, completely surrounding the cabin, and ready to capture the outlaws as they came out.

"Ho, men will you not come out now?" demanded Grayson Vaughan.

But no answer came.

"Do you think they could have escaped?" asked Captain Talbot.

"Impossible, for as the door closed our column divided and surrounded the house," replied Surgeon Powell.

Again the scout demanded in thunder tones for the outlaws to come out, but no reply was vouchsafed him.

The troopers were now becoming very nervous.

They were ready to fight double or treble their number and never flinch, and yet that cabin on fire and men within it, seeming rather to die in the flames than surrender, made them very nervous.

The flames were now rapidly gaining headway, and in several places fiery tongues had eaten their way through the roof.

Then Buffalo Bill, springing from his horse, ran toward one end of the cabin.

He remembered to have seen several large stones there, used as rests for large logs on the fire, and seizing one he dashed it against the door.

There was a loud crash, but the stone rebounded.

Again the heavy boards cracked and the cabin seemed to shake under the heavy blow.

But still the door remained firm.

The chain of men around the cabin now closed in a little nearer, and all eyes were turned upon Buffalo Bill as, for the third time, he raised the massive stone.

It was hot, almost blistering his hands, and its weight was such that only a strong man could lift it.

But, with a gigantic effort, and a run, to give it more force, Buffalo Bill hurled the stone once more.

There followed a terrific crash, the stone went inward, carrying the door with it, wrenched from its hinges, and the whole interior of the cabin seemed on fire.

Then, without an instant's hesitation, Buffalo Bill bounded into the burning cabin, a revolver in each hand as he sprang across the threshold.

A cry of horror arose from nearly every man who beheld his bold act. It seemed as if he was rushing to certain destruction, for the flames appeared to dart about him as though they would consume him, and the burning roof looked like it was tottering and falling.

Besides these dangers, the fact that it was the retreat of the Hussars, who, too desperate to surrender, preferred to die thus in the flames of their burning cabin, would be only too willing to drag the daring scout with them, caused Captain Vaughan to feel that Buffalo Bill would fall a victim to his own recklessness and daring.

With this feeling, the young captain bounded from his horse and rushed after the scout, Surgeon Powell being close at his side, and Captain Talbot and the others following close upon their heels.

They soon beheld the brave scout back slowly out of the cabin, unharmed by the flames, though the increasing heat had forced him to retreat.

"Captain Vaughan, the outlaws are not in that cabin, sir," said Cody.

"Not in there? Why, they must be there?"

"So I thought, sir, but they are not there."

"But we saw them there when the door was opened as one ran in."

"True, captain, but they are not there now."

"How in Heaven's name could they get out?"

"Ah, that is the mysterious part of it, captain."

"And where are they? May they not be concealed somewhere in it?"

"I saw the entire cabin, sir—every nook and piece of furniture in it, and there is no place of concealment unless——" and Buffalo Bill hesitated.

"Unless what?"

"Unless there is a cellar to the house, and they are there."

"Then they must have set fire to the house intentionally?"

"Doubtlessly, sir."

"But will they not smother in the cellar, Cody, with such an oven over them?"

"That we will have to wait and see, sir."

"Stay here all night, you mean?"

"Yes, sir, for we will then be able to discover what the morning will reveal."

The cabin was now all in flames, and the men were forced to retreat to the end of the inclosure and there watch it.

Then the order was given to stake the horses out, leaving the saddles and bridles on them, and each man to spread his blanket near his horse.

A guard of two soldiers and the fort scouts were detailed as pickets, and one of the latter and two of the former at once went on duty, and were to call the relief in two hours, for it was after midnight.

Then the camp seemed to sleep, leaving the cabin still burning.

But the first glimmer of dawn aroused Buffalo Bill, and he began to inspect the smoldering ruin of the cabin.

The coals were yet too hot to investigate for a cellar, and so the scout beckoned to Hawk-Eye Harry and Poker Paul, and the three set off on a tour of inspection.

Having gotten outside of the timber wall, Buffalo Bill said:

Pard Paul, you take a circuit here, about a hundred feet from the wall, and see if you can find any underground opening that might connect with the cabin."

"All right, pard."

"You, Pard Harry, go off some two hundred feet further and make the circuit, and I will go still further away."

"If any of us make any discoveries just halloo."

The three men then started off, and Poker Paul's circuit being the smallest, he made it in the shortest time, and stood waiting for a hail from the others, for he had not discovered anything of importance.

Hawk-Eye Harry made his circuit also without any discovery, and, seeing Paul, called to him to come to him.

The two just begun to wonder what Buffalo Bill's idea was, for they supposed that the Hussars had really perished in the cabin, as did all the soldiers, when a clear halloo was heard some distance off.

At once they went in the direction of the sound, and as they drew near the edge of the hill beheld the scout standing there quietly awaiting them.

"Well, pards, did you find anything?"

"No, Bill, not a thing."

"Nor I."

"Well, I have."

They showed interest, and Buffalo Bill led them to where a wash in the hillside was visible.

It had a thick growth of pines about it, and ran out from the slope of the hill.

"See there?"

He pointed to a large hole in the end of the washway, capable of admitting a man walking upright.

It had the appearance of being simply a cave-in, but the scout had already discovered that it was more.

The gully up to the cave-like opening was thick with fine straw, so that no trail would be left upon it, especially if a blanket was spread down to walk upon.

"Pards, this is the way the Hussars left the cabin."

"Bill, you has eyes that kin see through a rock," said Poker Paul, with enthusiasm.

"You've hit it, Bill," Hawk-Eye Harry said.

"Now, Harry, you go and see where those who came

out from here struck the big Indian trail into the mountains, and, Poker Paul, just go up to the camp and ask Captain Vaughan to bring the men here, for there is no need watching that end."

"And you, Bill?"

"I am going to have a look into this hole."

"Better go slow."

"I intend to, for there may still be wolves in the den."

And as the two scouts walked away on their mission Buffalo Bill entered the cave, which he now saw was artificial and had been dug out, the dirt being thrown into the waterwash and carried off by the rains.

When the troopers arrived at the gully, guided thither by Poker Paul, the scout was not visible, and it was sure that he had entered the cave.

The other scout now returned, and reported that the trail was hardly visible over the pine straw, but that it did lead to the large Indian trail leading further into the mountains, and that a number of horses had passed that way.

"But what about Buffalo Bill?" asked Surgeon Powell.

"He is doubtless inspecting the interior of the cave," Captain Talbot remarked.

"He has no lantern, and if he entered when Poker Paul left him here he has been in there over half an hour in the dark," Captain Vaughan said.

"I will take a camp lantern and go in search of him," Frank Powell said.

"And we will go, too, Poker," Hawk-Eye added.

"If you are gone long I will follow with my men, Powell," said Captain Vaughan.

A camp lantern was then gotten out of one of the packs by Boss, the negro servant of Captain Vaughan, and, taking it, Surgeon Powell entered the cave, the two scouts accompanying him.

The passage was high enough, and also sufficiently wide to admit of a large horse.

It showed that it had been dug out by human hands.

For fully three hundred yards they pushed along the narrow tunnel, and then, from the heat, knew that they must be near the cabin.

Suddenly they came out into a vast, cellar-like space, with posts all around, and the sides made solid by long poles.

The ceiling also was heavily logged, and from there came the heat, for they were under the burned cabin.

The space was large enough to hold fifty men, and the tracks showed that it was used for horses as well, for a footway of logs ran down from the roof, which enabled the animals to be brought in by way of the cabin.

But Surgeon Powell sprung quickly forward, before he took a close observation of the interior, as his eyes fell upon a form lying upon the dirt floor of the cellar.

It was Buffalo Bill, and he lay as motionless as though dead.

A wound on his head, as though made by the barrel of a revolver, showed what had felled him to the earth, and he still grasped his own weapons.

Placing his hand quickly upon his heart, Surgeon Powell said, fervently:

"Thank God, he is not dead!"

"Amen!" ejaculated Poker Paul, while Hawk-Eye Harry was rapidly making search for the one who had dealt the blow.

Under the log roadway leading to the cabin was visible a small hole three feet by two, and, seizing the lantern, Hawk-Eye gazed into it.

It had an upward tendency, and he said:

"Here is where the fellow was hiding that struck Bill, and he has escaped this way, for it leads to the open air just outside of the brush wall around the cabin, in my opinion."

"Well, Hawk-Eye, we'll see to that afterward, for now we must carry Cody out to the open air."

"You are right, surgeon, for I had forgot Bill in hoping to kill his enemy," and the three men raised the unconscious scout and hastily retreated along the narrow passage.

As they drew near the opening they met Captain Vaughan and his men just entering in search of them.

An exclamation of sorrow broke from every lip, at the sight of them, when it was seen that they were bearing Buffalo Bill, who had the appearance of being dead.

Laid down upon the fine straw, the scout was at once in the hands of the skillful surgeon of the fort, so skillful, in fact, that the soldiers had given him the name of the "Magic Doctor."

"He had a stunning blow, and was evidently struck by one who did not see him.

"It was a pistol-barrel that hit him, and the blow caused this wound, but his thick sombrero saved his skull from fracture, fortunately, and he will soon come around all right, I feel assured."

As though to verify the surgeon's words at once, the scout breathed heavily, moaned, opened his eyes, and, after a moment, sat up.

"Well, pards, what's the matter?" he said gazing into the anxious faces about him.

"The matter is with you, Bill," said Frank Powell.

"What's the matter with me, Doc?" he asked, with surprise.

"That's what we want to know."

"Well I feel as if I had been on a racket, and my head feels as big as a barrel— Ah! I went into that black hole, did I not, and I think I remember now getting into hot quarters, and—it seems to me I was struck in the head."

He put up his hands as he uttered the words slowly, and his fingers touched the wound.

"I did get it, Doc, after all."

"Yes, Bill, and but for your hat it would have been serious, perhaps fatal."

"Bless the old sombrero; but who hit me?"

"That we do not know."

"I'll never tell you, for I don't know."

"In fact, I didn't know I was hit until you woke me up just now."

"But I've got a hard head, and it won't matter much; but where was I?"

"The surgeon and the scouts took a camp lantern and found you in the cellar under the burned cabin, Bill," Captain Vaughan said.

"Yes, I got that far in the dark, and then it seems the darkness increased, for I don't see through it yet, but have you been to breakfast?"

"Not yet."

"I'm hungry."

All laughed, and Boss set to work at once on breakfast, while Buffalo Bill sprang to his feet, and, after a dose of medicine the surgeon gave him, seemed to feel all right again.

"Where are my scout pards?" he asked.

They were now missed, and it soon became evident that they had gone back into the cave, for the lantern was gone.

They put in an appearance, however, ere others started after them, coming over the hill, and not through the cave.

"Pards, we found daylight out o' t'other end!"

"Thar is a small creepin' hole thar that comes out right among ther brush wall around ther cabin, and ther galoot as hit Bill jist skipped off thet way; but yer might as well try ter find a bird' trail through a fog as ter look fer it in thet pine straw," said Poker Paul.

"Yes, the Hussars gave us the go-by, even after we caught them in their den," Hawk-Eye Harry replied.

"We have scared them out, and we know their retreat," said Buffalo Bill, "so I guess our adventure with them is about ended. They have probably left this part of the country for good. We may turn back to the fort to report our success."

Within an hour all were mounted, the scout's wound having been dressed by Surgeon Powell, and it was not long before they arrived in safety at the fort.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 59) will contain "Buffalo Bill and the Masked Hussars; or, Fighting the Prairie Pirates."

Buffalo Bill guessed wrong for once, for the Masked Hussars had not left that part of the country. They gave the scout a lively tussle before he finally hunted them down.

How he succeeded in breaking up the band makes lively reading, and will all be told in the bang-up story printed in next week's issue.



THRILLING ADVENTURE



Hot weather coming in, boys. So are the entries in this contest. Don't let the warmth keep you from working in your efforts to win a prize.

Think of the great times you will have on the creek or river if you win one of those fishing sets. Remember, it's a great year for fish.

Look on page 31 for description of the prizes and how to get one.

An Encounter With "Old Club Foot."

(By James Wilhelm.)

It is not often, in this day in the Rocky Mountain region, that a tale can be told of a bear attempting to eat up a boy or a man, but such was an actual fact last week in the Kannah Creek country.

I and a companion were out bear hunting just about one week ago. We found the tracks of a huge bear which is well known in that country as "Old Club-Foot." He had come down from the top of Grand Mesa, driven from there by a storm, and we soon ran into his tracks.

We knew at once that it was "Old Club Foot," as his tracks were well known in that country, measuring at least nine inches across the ball of the foot in the snow. We followed the animal to Indian Creek where we separated, and I followed the trail across the creek.

I noticed that the bear had gone into some thickly-growing quaking asp, and I went near it to see where he had gone.

I determined to enter it. I had advanced but a few feet when I noticed Bruin standing immediately in front of me.

We were less than ten feet apart when the bear made a lunge for me, evidently having been in waiting and ready to fight.

He struck me full in the breast, knocking me down. However, an instant before and while the bear was only five feet from me, I pointed the gun at him and shot, the bullet taking effect in the animal's mouth, breaking his jaw.

All this was done in much less time than it takes to tell it, and that fortunate shot saved my life. When I fell I came down on my right arm, and the bear started to gnaw on my left arm. I was utterly helpless, as my arms were pinioned to the ground. But the shot which had struck the great silver tip had done pretty effective work, and Bruin could only gnaw at my arm with one

side of his mouth, but this was enough to make my blood run cold, as I thought that this was my last moment on this earth.

I made desperate efforts to rise, but I could not, and as the bear found that he could do nothing with his jaws, one side of them being broken, he suddenly left me and went off at a flying gait.

As soon as I recovered, notwithstanding that my arm was badly lacerated, I grasped my gun and pursued him into the heavy growth, but the bear had made his escape.

I followed his tracks and bloodstains, and as I entered the creek I met my companion, who was excited and he explained that he heard the shot and came to help me.

We followed the trail and discovered Bruin about four miles from where I nearly lost my life. Two bullets in the breast ended "Old Club Foot's" career.

The skin was sold and the bear measured seven feet eight inches, and weighed 729 lbs. The farmers are rid of a great enemy now, though I came near to my death. I am now in the hospital nursing a badly lacerated arm.

I can always tell an exciting story hereafter of a dangerous encounter with "Old Club Foot."

My Race for Life.

(By Claude Lindsay, Kansas.)

During the month of June, 1901, I was spending a few days in the Wichitaw Mountains. It was a still, warm day, and the sky was spotless. I was in search of mountain sheep, hoping to be able to capture a small one to bring home for a pet. I had followed the trail of a flock for some time, thinking I must be near them. I followed another path with the hope of getting above them, as I was about to where I thought the herd must pass.

I sat down. About five minutes passed. I heard heavy steps a moment later. I jumped out into the path with the hope of scaring the old sheep away and catching a young one.

When I jumped out no sheep was in sight, but something lots larger.

It was a black bear.

I was so badly scared I dropped my gun and lariat rope and took to my heels. I felt my cap raise on my head, my hair was standing on end. I ran fast, so did the bear. I wished that there were no such a place as the Wichitaw Mountains. I fancied I could feel the bear hugging me. I dared to look back. He was some twenty feet behind me. I was almost exhausted.

As I came down into a valley I fancied I saw a man in the distance. I heard some one crying for help. I looked for them, but saw no one.

Again, the cry of,

"Help, help or I shall be lost!" reached my ear.

I wondered who it could be. The voice sounded familiar. I found out that I was making all the noise myself. I was scared so badly that I could not realize what I was doing when all at once I went headlong into a ditch some ten feet deep.

I lay still. Something hurt my side. I thought the bear had me. I groaned.

Then I discovered my six-shooters in my belt. I drew them out and—crack! crack! I emptied the contents of both in what I supposed to be the bear on the edge of the ditch. I slowly walked up to it and found I had shot a large cedar stump.

Turning around, I saw my old Newfoundland dog. I threw my arms around his neck for I was so glad it was not a bear.

I had only been followed by my faithful dog Carlo. I think that I was the worst frightened and most thankful sixteen-year-old boy in America.

Nearly Swallowed.

(By Edgar Rogers, Florida.)

One hot summer about two years ago, my father, uncle and myself were camping in the everglades of Florida. My uncle and my father had started off to hunt deer two days before and had not yet returned, I was staying at camp by myself and was getting anxious about them.

After a while I decided that I would start out and hunt for them. I had gone about two and a half miles when I saw standing in my path a large alligator.

I turned around and started for camp, and he was right behind me. After a while I looked behind for him, and all of a sudden fell up to my waist in mud. I could hardly move and he was coming right behind me.

When I was in his very jaws he let out a loud grunt, and then I heard a gun report and fainted. When I came to I was in camp and my father and uncle were standing over me.

A Terrible Fall.

(By Harry Smith, Neb.)

When I was about twelve years old I had a most terrible accident. One afternoon I went over to play with another boy on a trolley. It extended from the top of the barn (about twenty-five feet high) to a point about thirty yards away directly in front of the barn.

We generally had only one boy on the trolley, but we had three this time. Some other boys would get hold of

the other end of the rope and pull it tight. I happened to be one of the boys to straddle the rope. The boys who pulled the rope pulled so hard that the pulley that held the rope broke, and a piece of it (the pulley) hit me on the head.

I lit on the ground all right and commenced to laugh, but as soon as I saw that the blood was spurting from my head I changed my tune. I started for home, while my brother ran and got the doctor. While I was running home I was so near crazy that I ran into a barbed wire fence and cut a gash in my leg about an inch long. I have both scars yet, and I never want to go through the same experience again.

Saved From the Flames.

(By Charles Parnell, New York.)

One summer, when my brother and I were spending our vacation in the country, we had a very narrow escape from being burned to death. On this certain day we had agreed to sleep in the hay loft of the barn and as soon as it became dark we proceeded to the barn.

Ascending to the loft we threw ourselves on the hay and were soon fast asleep. I was suddenly awakened by the shouts of fire which came from the farmyard. Sitting up I found the barn full of smoke, and I at once awoke my brother.

He said that we would have to get out of the barn, but the smoke was so thick that we could not find the ladder leading below.

The fire had now gained a great headway and we being scorched by the flames called loudly for help. Suddenly the trap door near us opened and our father, quickly climbing through, carried us to safety.

As a result, we were confined to bed for a week and then returned to Brooklyn. Was not that a narrow escape from being burned to death?

A Graveyard Story.

(By E. Eppinger, Michigan.)

I will relate here an incident that occurred to me when I was quite a boy.

A few years ago a creek, that was at that time known as the Bloody Run Creek, ran through the Elmwood Cemetery, one of the most historical as well as one of the prettiest spots in Detroit. Here it was that Pontiac, the great Indian chief, gave himself up, together with eight hundred other braves, to the "whites," and it was here that my fellow associates and myself, or better known as the "Graveyard Sharks," would harbor night after night.

My story tells particularly of our chief, "Dare Devil George," and myself. One night we were all sitting around our fire (it was a chilly autumn night) telling ghost stories, when suddenly a storm raged over us, and so we prepared for home. So after George and I bade the boys good-night we made our way through the cemetery as fast as we two could. But it was too much for me, so I let George go ahead while I went slowly after him. By this time the rain came down in torrents, and I became frightened for I think it not at all pleasant traveling through a cemetery at night especially when it

storms. The darkness was intense. I could hardly see my hand in front of me. I followed the path to the gate, but with some difficulty, for I thought I would never find the gate. Now I came to a standstill, for I was frightened out of my wits, as I saw an object moving about in front of me. It appeared to me like a "phantom." What it really was I could not discern, as it was too dark to see a few paces ahead.

Now, I ran faster than ever, because I thought I was up against something. A chill ran through my blood. I reached out my hand and grabbed at something, and in a second I held it in my hand. My hair stood upon my head like bristles, I was so frightened. Just then a flash of lightening came, and I could see what I held in my hand. Great was my surprise when I discovered that what I held in my hand was nothing but a horse's tail. There being no horse around, and my grabbing a tail from "somewhere," is a mystery to me, and one that I cannot to this day solve.

I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. When I came home, I went straight to bed, never saying a word to anybody, concerning the adventures of that night, because I knew had I told them about it they would surely all laugh at me. Now I feel that I shall never have the desire to enter that place again. I really had a tough night of it.

A Fishing Yarn.

(By Arthur Rothwell, Neb.)

Once when I had been out fishing and was just crossing home on the railroad bridge when I heard a low whistle.

I started to run for the other end, but on looking a second time I saw the train behind me, and as I turned around I was confronted by another engine which was on the track I was on.

My only hope was in jumping into the creek, so I tried it. I was very fortunate in drifting against a pile and with the help of the spikes in the pile I got up and very well soaked I arrived at home, but I had lost my fish.

Buried In An Undug Grave.


(By Henry Todd, N. Y.)

On June 7, 1898, while playing tag on top of a sand pit in Walling, near Garfield, N. J., with four boys beside myself, I ran near the edge.

There was a cracking and grinding noise and one of the boys shouted out to me to look out, but too late! All I could do was to give a scream and down I went thirty-five feet below in the soft sand with more sand on top of me.

I was buried alive for forty-five minutes when I was dug out unconscious, and so stayed for six and one-half hours.

When I came to I was in a farm house near by, and had to stay in bed for three weeks and suffer pain in my chest. I am going to join Buffalo Bill's show.

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